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**The Person of Christ in the Seventh-day Adventism:
Doctrine-Building and E. J. Wagonner's Potential in Developing
Christological Dialogue with Eastern Christianity**

Nicolae Butoiu

May 2018

ABSTRACT

The feat of salvation and of the everlasting life had been (and still is) one of the most profound anxieties expressed by the Christian believers, which led to a consistent scrutinizing of the identity of Jesus Christ.

Titled, “*The Person of Christ in the Seventh-day Adventism: Doctrine-Building and E. J. Waggoner’s Potential in Developing Christological Dialogue with Eastern Christianity*,” this thesis presents the historical context and the essence of the debates in which the Seventh-day Adventists adopted the belief that Jesus Christ is fully divine and eternal, and abandoned the Arian, and semi-Arian teachings of its pioneers. The thesis also demonstrates that, with a seasoned Christology in place, the Seventh-day Adventism is ready to engage a more meaningful Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity, for the purpose of religious coexistence, if nothing else.

The adoption of the Trinitarian Christology by the Seventh-Day Adventists has been widely debated during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, both as matter of ecclesiastic identity, and as a quest for spiritual salvation. While some argued that by adopting a Trinitarian Christology that resembled a Catholic creed, Seventh-day Adventism endangered itself of “returning” to a creedal Catholicism. Others recognized that only a Christ who forever is the true God, and who also became truly human, can indeed save humanity from the bondage of sin, and grant everlasting life. As this thesis demonstrates, Waggoner’s arguments that favoured the Trinitarian Christology were built on the Scripture, and away from any interference of Catholicism.

Beyond historical criticism, this thesis also delves into comparative dogmatics in order to demonstrate that a similar interpretation of the Scripture by the Seventh-day Adventism, and the Eastern Orthodox Christianity yielded similar Christological results with regard to the relationship between the divine nature and human nature of Jesus Christ. Last but not least, in spite of an apparent contextual disparity that might emerge from the comparison between American Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity, this thesis also demonstrates that both parties were concerned with the same questions regarding the identity of Jesus Christ, who, as described by Mark, “even the wind and the waves obey!” (Mark 4:41)

**The Person of Christ in the Seventh–day Adventism:
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in Developing Christological Dialogue
with Eastern Christianity**

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Middlesex University

May 2018

Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

DECLARATIONS

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.



Signed (Candidate)

Date 25 May 2018

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.



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DEDICATION

☪ – To the Almighty God for the thirst He put in my heart; to my wife Monique and to my four daughters – Manuela, Vicky, Elena and Tina for challenging me with their two constant questions ‘How do you know is true?’ and ‘Did it happened to you?!’

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANF</i>	Ante Nicene Fathers
<i>EGW</i>	Ellen G. White
<i>EJW</i>	Ellet J. Waggoner
<i>JBF</i>	Justification by Faith
<i>NPNF</i>	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
<i>PG</i>	Patrologia Graeca
<i>PL</i>	Patrologia Latina
<i>RF</i>	Righteousness by Faith
<i>SDA</i>	Seventh-day Adventist

RESEARCH QUESTION(S) and METHODOLOGY

The theme analyzed by this thesis rests upon a twin cluster of questions: primary and secondary. While the primary set of questions investigates *why the Seventh-day Adventism adopted a Trinitarian Christology*, the secondary set of questions investigates if *the Seventh-day Adventism is ready for a meaningful Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity*.

In attempting to answer the primary set of questions I will first adopt a dogmatic platform in order to set the stage for the normative Christology, as developed during the Early Church (chapter 1). With this frame of reference in place, I will then proceed to explore the Christological debates that took place within Seventh-day Adventism prior and after 1888, with the intent to illustrate the context of profound social and spiritual transformations of American Adventism (chapter 2), and the religious background of the new converts that led to the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology by the Seventh-day Adventism (chapter 3).

In preparing the transition toward the secondary set of questions, I will focus on Dr. Ellet J Waggoner's adoption of Trinitarian Christology, which in my view, derived from Waggoner's understanding of the doctrine of justification. As it appears, Dr. Waggoner's doctrine of justification served as a stepping stone toward his adoption of Trinitarian Christology. In Waggoner's conceptualization, *based on the eternal principle of the Initiative of God (as derived from the Protoevangelium), it is not justification asking for a certain level of Justifier, but the other way around: The level, the quality, the nature and the status in Godhead of the Justified sets the level and the course of Justification*. This logic indicates that only a Saviour who is God Himself would be able to erase the sin completely. With this demonstration in place, Dr. Waggoner adopted and promoted a Trinitarian Christology as a personal conclusive assurance, with no influence from creedal Catholicism.

Having Waggoner's Trinitarian Christology clarified on a dogmatic support, I will shift toward the secondary cluster of questions which I will attempt to answer from the perspective of political theology. To set the stage for Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity, I will include inter-confessional considerations by drawing parallels between Waggoner's thinking and Orthodox Christianity, with minimal references to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism (chapter 4).

Finally, in attempting to answer the secondary set of questions—if *the Seventh-day Adventism is ready for a meaningful Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity*—I will continue the exploration of Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner’s Christology, which I will contrast and compare with the traditional Orthodox Christology, as explained by three Romanian Orthodox theologians such as Dumitru Stăniloae, Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean. The writings of these three Orthodox theologians are representative for Orthodox Christianity in the sense that Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean are the main authors of the standard textbook of *Dogmatic Theology*, published with the approval of the Holy Synod (the chief governing body) of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and used as the standard textbook in the Romanian Orthodox Theological Seminaries. As for Dumitru Stăniloae, his reputation is widely known in the Orthodox theological circles and beyond. Kallistos Ware—the former 1966–2001 Spalding Lecturer of Eastern Orthodox Studies at the University of Oxford, and now an Orthodox bishop—considers that Dumitru Stăniloae occupies “a position in present-day Orthodoxy comparable to that of Karl Barth in Protestantism and Karl Rahner in Roman Catholicism.”¹ In other words, while Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean inform us about what the Romanian Orthodox clergy learn in terms of basic tenets of Orthodox Christology, Dumitru Stăniloae introduces Christology to the inter-confessional arena. The Christological comparison will be limited to the doctrines of *kenosis* and *hypostatic union*, which in light of strong similarities between the writings of Ellet J. Waggoner (on the Adventist side) and those of Stăniloae, Todoran and Zăgrean (on the Orthodox side), my hope is to demonstrate that Adventist Christology is not only mature enough to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Orthodox Christianity, but it can serve as a platform for improving ecclesiastic relationships in protecting freedom of worship in areas where Orthodox Christianity is numerically superior. Using Romanian Orthodox Theologians as my primary sources, I do acknowledge the possibility of bias; however, unlike Protestantism, the Orthodox Theology is somewhat restrictive in the sense that Orthodox theologians cannot distance themselves from what has been decided during the seven Ecumenical Councils.

In conclusion, I hope that this thesis will first clarify the rationales and the context in which Seventh-day Adventism adopted a Trinitarian Christology, while also making a strong contribution to the foundations of a meaningful future Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity.

¹ Kallistos Ware, “Foreword,” *The Experience of God: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, by Dumitru Stăniloae (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), xxiv.

Key Concepts and Terminology

Christology | (Gr. Χριστός, Christ; λογία, science, or discipline of study) represents the theological field of study that attempts to answer who Jesus Christ was. Christology is anchored into the canonical books of the New Testament and it focuses on the nature and the person of Jesus Christ, as a divine and human person. At the level of divinity, Christology focuses on the nature and the Person of Jesus in relation with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the context of eternity. At the human level Christology focuses on the relationship between the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus Christ, from a historical perspective.

Hypostatic Union | (Gr. ἕνωσις union, ὑποστατική hypostasis, substance, nature) refers to the union between the divine nature and the human nature in the Person of Jesus Christ. As a doctrine, the hypostatic union was adopted at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. At this council it was defined that one and the same Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord, Only-begotten, whose divine and human natures are united unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably.

JBF (Justification by Faith) | (Lat. *sola fide*, faith alone) Justification by Faith, a.k.a. justification by faith alone, is a Protestant theological doctrine that asserts that God's forgiveness is granted to the guilty sinner and received by the guilty sinner through the sinner's exclusive act of belief, without any effort through works. Sola fide is anchored into the belief that the entire mankind is fallen, cursed, sinful, and unable to save itself from God's wrath. On the account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God grants the sinners with a judicial pardon or justification, only as a result of their faith. While one's works play no role, faith is regarded as being passive, while its benefits are active. Justification by Faith alone is rejected by the Orthodox, by the Catholics, and by the Arminian Protestants for lack of coherency.

Justification | (Lat. *justificare*, do justice to), according to the Lutheran and Calvinist Protestant theology, represents God's intervention to eliminate guilt and penalty for the sin committed by man, while declaring the sinner to be righteous through Christ's redeeming sacrifice. In a general sense, justification refers to being made right, or just, or righteous, or being perfectly aligned with God. Through justification it is understood that man is (re)aligned with God through Christ's atoning blood of sacrifice, his sin is forgiven, he is reconciled with God (Rom. 4:20–25). Humanity is saved from eternal death as long as humanity continues to remain on God's path.

Justifier | (Lat. *justus* justice, *facere* to make) is a person who makes justice, or an entity that argues to defend or justify someone—an apologist, vindicator, advocate, advocator, exponent, proponent—who pleads for a cause or propounds an idea. In Protestant theology, Jesus Christ is the Justifier.

Kenosis | (Gr. κένωσις, emptiness) is the doctrine of God’s self-emptying, by His own will, to become entirely receptive to God’s divine will. God “poured out” His divine splendor from within Himself to become a man. In the Orthodox understanding kenosis is only possible through humility, and it has two stages. The first stage reflects the divine decision and acceptance to empty Himself of his splendor and power. The second stage reflects the history of kenosis itself, which begins with the incarnation of the Son of God, and ends with the death on the cross; time in which the Son assumed human nature in an ontological way.

Millennialism | (Lat. *millennium*, thousand years) is a belief held by some Christian denominations which contends that there will be a Golden Age or Paradise on Earth in which Christ will rule for one thousand years, prior to the final judgment, and the future world to come. Regarding the timing of the Millennial Kingdom, some Christians believed that the one-thousand-years-peace was to begin before Christ’s arrival (pre-millennialists), while others believed that this will begin after Christ’s arrival (post-millennialists).

Perichoresis | (Gr. περιχώρησις, going around, making room, rotation) is an expression used in reference to the doctrine of the relationship between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) to one another, which is characterized by interpenetration, co-inhabitation, mutual fellowship, surrounding, or indwelling. The doctrine has its bases in Christ’s declaration of cohabitation between Him and the Father, “I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)

Synergy | (Gr. συνεργία; συν + εργός “working together”) is a concept linked with the doctrine of grace, and it refers to the cooperation between God and man in achieving salvation. The work of synergy begins with Jesus, continues with man’s faith and work, and ends in Jesus, simply because Jesus is both the cause and the solution; that is, “the Alpha and the Omega” of the entire creation. Orthodox view of synergism holds that man always has the freedom to choose to work with God (or to refuse); however God’s part is incomparably more significant than man’s work. Protestant Christians who hold Arminian views believe that salvation is achieved through divine-human cooperation called synergism.

Trinity | (Lat. *Trinitas*, triad, threefold) is a Christian doctrine which holds that God is one in essence and three in consubstantial persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus

Christ), and the Holy Spirit. The Persons of the Trinity are defined as real, distinguished from each other, with personal characteristics, each retaining the fullness of the divine essence, which is indivisible and undivided; being one and the same from eternity and for eternity. Each Person has uniquely special qualities: the Father is unborn and un-proceeded; the Son is born from the Father from eternity; the Holy Spirit is proceeded from the Father from eternity. The Father gives birth to the Son from being and for eternity, and proceeds the Holy Spirit. The Father is unborn and un-proceeded. In terms of external manifestation, the Father is the Creator, the Son is the Savior, and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier; the Comforter who fulfils everything.

Introduction

Central to Christianity's *raison d'être* is the very question of who Jesus Christ was in the history of mankind. Was He a special man with supernatural powers to heal the crippled, give eyesight to the blind, and even resurrect the dead? Was He a semi-God or God Himself? If a semi-God, then was He eternal? Was He uncreated or created? If God, why did He suffer and died on the cross?

Such lingering questions triggered the eruption of doctrinal complexities which *in turn* often yielded into furious religious politics.¹ Words used in defining the devotional instinct of faith were as ambiguous in one's mind as they were dangerous in the public life—particularly in the early centuries—as a simple misuse of an adjective could send someone to jail or into exile.

The architecture of Christian doctrine was shaped by the creative tension between colliding hermeneutics over Jesus Christ's power to save humanity, and to offer everlasting life. Therefore, faith had to be anchored into the paramount belief that indeed Jesus Christ was God Himself.

Whenever the Christological hermeneutics clashed, the community became subjected to various forms of instability, ranging from fierce intellectual controversies that divided the elite, to rituals of exclusion, physical punishment, exile, and even death. Such instabilities triggered by Christological hermeneutics were often resolved into massive regional splits and divisions, with a gap that widened furiously; even if contrary to Christ's desire for "all to be one" (John 17:21).

¹ Charles Joseph Hefele, who wrote over a century ago about the sophisticated debates that took place during Early Christianity, recognized that balancing these Christological views was a significant challenge mainly because, "the two principal points of the doctrine of the Logos—the unity of the Son with the Father, and the distinction between the Father and the Son—have been regarded as contradictory propositions; and instead of preserving each in its theological entirety and relation to the other, they have thought to annihilate the one by the other." See, Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils, From the Original Documents to the Close of the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325*, trans. William R. Clark (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1883), 223–224.

The attempt to reconcile such polarized interpretations, by evading the deadlocks of the paradox, could only further the ideological blunders and dogmatic partisanship. There might have been perhaps better for the Church if the theological elites accepted the contradictory propositions as a defeat of human ability to reason, or give into paradox, rather than rushing into furious controversies that led to the drama of Christian separation. Therefore, key to the research presented by this thesis, is the effort to heal such wounds of history created by clashing Christological hermeneutics, and look for theological commonalities (and perhaps common sense), considering that Christ came to save the entire humanity.

The excursus into the clashing Christological hermeneutics that led to the separation of the Christian community begins during the Apostolic Age, but the splits themselves became formalized only centuries later. The first separation between the so called “Monophysites” and the “Nicenes” took place in A.D. 451 during a general assembly of the bishops known as the Council of Chalcedon.² The division continued with the Schism of 1054 between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox,³ which among other dissonances, it clashed over the question of Christ’s authority over the Holy Spirit (Filioque). Martin Luther’s *Ninety-five Theses* of 1517, which triggered the Reformation, led to an additional separation between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants,⁴ and it involved fierce debates over Christ’s role in the justification of mankind. Under the theological and the ecclesiastic leadership of Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and others,⁵ the fragmentation continued; this time on the account of freedom of interpretation of who Christ was, with an exclusive focus on the

² Cf. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, Vol.45 (Liverpool University Press, 2005), 37–50.

³ Cf. Brett Whalen, “Rethinking the schism of 1054: Authority, heresy, and the Latin Rite,” in *Traditio* 62 (2007): 1–24.

⁴ Cf. Martin Luther, *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 3–25.

⁵ Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56–123..

Scripture rather than on church tradition, as Rome insisted.⁶ During the 16th century, the Protestant Christians split further between Presbyterians, Anabaptists, and Congregationalists, and were followed by the 17th century additional splits into Baptists, Pilgrim Fathers, Quakers, and other denominations, focusing yet again on the question of who Christ was. During the 18th century, the Protestant Christians split further into Moravians, Swedenborgians, and Methodists,⁷ and during the 19th century they split into Adventists, Mormons and Transcendentalists, Salvation Army, as well as other denominations;⁸ context in which Christology remained a central subject.

Nevertheless, the path of fragmentation of Christianity was somehow disturbed by the twentieth century's ecumenical movement, which attempted to reverse the tide of fragmentation by instilling a sense of unity in Christ.⁹ Therefore, this thesis carries the undertone of the reversal of the tide of Christian fragmentation, but not in the sense of trivializing the unique claim for truthfulness made by each Church, but by focusing on the common hermeneutics in identifying who Jesus Christ is for each of us.

Titled, "The Person of Christ in the Seventh-day Adventism: Doctrine-Building and E. J. Wagonner's Potential in Developing Christological Dialogue with Eastern Christianity," this thesis focuses primarily on the essence and the nature of the debates that reshaped the Seventh-day Adventist Christological discourse, and redirected it towards Trinitarian Christology; away from Arianism and Semi-Arianism. Furthermore, in the interest of peaceful coexistence among religious faiths, the thesis also attempts to demonstrate that the Seventh-day Adventist Church holds a robust Christology, and as

⁶ Thomas H. Groome, "What Makes a School Catholic," in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity* (1996): 107–125.

⁷ George Henry Trabert, *Church History for the People*, Pilger Publishing House, 1897.

⁸ John B. Sparks, *Time Chart of World Religions: A Histomap of Faith Through the Ages*, New York: Metro Books, 2013. (See the attached leaflet.)

⁹ Jeffrey Gros, Eamon McManus, Ann Riggs, eds. *Introduction to Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 9–34.

such, it is ready and confident to open its doors to a meaningful Christological conversation with Orthodox Christianity.

Using a combination of historical critical method and a political theology method, the thesis is limited to its attempt to answering a twin cluster of questions. Using a historical critical method, the primary questions are set to investigate *why* and *how* the Seventh-day Adventism adopted a Trinitarian Christology. The secondary set of questions is anchored into the socio-political theology, and it attempts to demonstrate that the Seventh-day Adventist Christology is now sufficiently seasoned to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Orthodox Christianity, as both Churches hold a seemingly common understanding of the Person of Christ.

The adoption of the Trinitarian Christology by the Seventh-day Adventists had been widely debated during the end of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of the twentieth; both as matter of ecclesiastic identity, and as a quest for spiritual salvation. Some argued that by adopting a Trinitarian Christology that may reconstruct if not resemble the Catholic creed; the Seventh-day Adventism endangered itself of “returning” to a creedal Catholicism. Others came to recognize that only a Christ who forever is the true God, and who also became truly human, can indeed save humanity from the bondage of sin, and grant everlasting life.

As this thesis demonstrates, the arguments that favoured the Trinitarian Christology were built on the Scripture—away from any interference of Catholicism, and without the formal help of the authority of historical theological landmarks (councils, tradition, or religious politics)—still not without the indirect moral and spiritual impact that these Councils had upon the theology and history of Christianity in general.

Furthermore, the thesis will underscore the major role played by Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner in redirecting the Christological discourse during the Minneapolis Conference

of 1888 and after; and contributed to the abandonment of the initial Arian Christology disseminated by the pioneers of Adventism.

It is also important to clarify that the abandonment of Arianism (and semi-Arianism) was triggered by a keen analysis of the Scripture which favoured a Trinitarian Christology, as well as by the Trinitarian background of the new converts (and of the membership in general, as they were coming mostly from fully Trinitarian churches), who felt uneasy believing in a Christ who is not God himself. They all understood that salvation could only be possible through divine sacrificial love for mankind, since “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

It was on the promise of the Protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15) that salvation can only come from God himself. Viewing Christ as a lesser-than-God creature, who was limited in time and in divine authority (as the traditional Arians insisted) implied that God did not really demonstrate love and compassion for humanity, and by saving humanity from the distance, God did not really fulfil His compassionate promise from the Protoevangelium; thus salvation becoming a logical impossibility.

Last but not least, the Arian logic also entered into a regrettable collision with the Gospel of John, which revealed that Jesus Christ (or the Word) is the eternal God himself, since “in the beginning was the Word”. . . and “God was the Word” (John 1: 1–2), and as such lost the credibility of the *sola scriptura* proponents of Christology.

Beyond historical criticism—as it will be documented in its chapters—this thesis also uses comparative dogmatics as a platform for negotiation between Adventism and Orthodoxy—as the trail of Christological analysis shifts towards political theology—demonstrating that the authority given to the Scripture both by the Seventh-day Adventism, and the Eastern Orthodox Christianity yielded similar Christological conclusions.

In light of my own cultural background—with all its advantages and contextual limitations—I will analyze Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner’s Christology from the systematic perspective of Orthodox Christianity. I will do so in order to highlight Waggoner’s potential for developing a Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity in General. By using the Orthodox dogmatic setting as a platform of analysis, my approach will be further enhanced because it will benefit from a more diversified spectrum of analysis, while also increasing the capacity of measuring the level of Orthodox reliance on Scripture as supporting evidence for its dogmas. I must also emphasize that both Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches consider Scripture and Tradition to have an equal stand. However, while Roman Catholicism tends to regard tradition as superseding the Scripture,¹⁰ Orthodox Christianity grants the Scripture with a relative primacy over tradition; tradition serving primarily as a complementary background for interpreting the Scripture.¹¹

Currently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church holds the following official belief with regard to the identity of Jesus Christ:

¹⁰ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God’s Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture.” (Art. 113) Furthermore, the *Catechism* states that “it was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture.” (Art. 120) Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Ed. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana/Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 32, 34.

¹¹ As the two Romanian Orthodox dogmatists Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean write, “The Holy Tradition complements and interprets the Holy Scripture, which is why its role is *complementary* and *explicative*.” As for differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, the Romanian theologians explain that, “there are differences between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church as to how to conceive Tradition. The Orthodox Church insists that Tradition represents the unwritten apostolic teachings preserved by the Church in the age of the Ecumenical Councils (the first eight centuries), which were officially uncovered and formulated in the decisions of these synods, to which the Church has not added anything since. However, the Roman Catholic Church extends Tradition beyond the era of the seven Ecumenical Councils, by adding various decisions of its so-called ecumenical councils until today, as well as by adding various papal decrees and pronouncements. As such, it is not necessary for Tradition to wear the apostolic seal, to be strengthened by the Holy Fathers, or to be believed by all. Tradition is considered by the Catholic Church as a deposit or treasury of faith, to which the Church is encouraged to resort when establishing a new dogma; thus the Church being able to raise to the rank of dogma newer theological opinions or even theological mistakes.” Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică, manual pentru seminariile teologice* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1991), 80, 81–82.

“God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God’s power and was attested as God’s promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)”¹²

At the same time, the official *Catechism* of the Romanian Orthodox Church displays its Christology exclusively on the account of the Articles 2 through 7 of the Nicene Creed, which states,

“And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father, through Whom all things came into existence, Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down from the heavens, and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of Whose kingdom there will be no end.”

As the Romanian Orthodox *Catechism* clarifies, the texts of the Creed

“speak to us about the most magnificent and most wonderful act of Divine love for us. They tell us that the One who saved us is the very Son of God, and the salvation was done through His incarnation as a man, through His teachings, through his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, after which He ascended into heavens in glory to be at the right side of the Father.”¹³

Last but not least, in spite of an apparent contextual disparity that might emerge from comparing American Protestantism with Eastern Christianity in its Romanian version, the centrality of the argument is to demonstrate that both Christianities were concerned with similar questions regarding the identity of Jesus Christ, and both considered the authority of the Scripture to be paramount in the process of interpretation. Furthermore, considering the quest for salvation, the identity of Jesus was crucial to any generation

¹² Seventh-day Adventist Church, “Our Beliefs: God Son,” accessed on April 30, 2017 <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/son/>.

¹³ Biserica Ortodoxă Română, *Învățătura de Credință Creștină Ortodoxă* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2000), 67.

from any geographical context, as they all asked who Jesus Christ was, because “even the wind and the waves obey Him.” (Mark 4:41)

In terms of content, while the first chapter sets the tone for dogmatic calibration of Christology, the second and the third chapters focus on the particular historical environment of the Seventh-day Adventism. With such setting in place, the fourth and the fifth chapters delve deeper into Ellet J. Waggoner’s surprising potential in opening the doors for Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity.

Chapter 1

In attempting to answer the primary set of questions, this chapter will outline the dogmatic platform of the “normative” Christology as it was developed during the Early Church, with the establishment of the Trinitarian doctrine. The chapter will survey the pivotal role of the Scripture during various theological controversies such as Arianism and Nestorianism, which led to the establishment of the Ecumenical Councils that defined who Jesus Christ was. Highlighting the pivotal role of Scripture and the role of Church councils in achieving creedal uniformity, the chapter will conclude with the historical standard definition of the dogma of Trinity as preserved by Eastern Christianity. The Orthodox definition of Trinitarian doctrine will also be introduced as leverage for comparing Adventist and Orthodox Christology in the final chapters. With a general dogmatic frame of reference set by this first chapter, the second chapter will proceed to the particular context in which the exploration of the Christological debates that took place within Seventh-day Adventism in America, solidifying not only the link between the *general* and the *particular*, but also the fertile soil for cross-fertilization.

Chapter 2

Concerned with the identity of Jesus Christ, the debates that surrounded the 1888 “Righteous by Faith Conference” in Minneapolis had, in a way, resuscitated the theological paradigms once raised by the Early Christians. These new (yet old) arguments erupted in an environment dominated by the profound social and spiritual transformations of American Protestantism, which was infused by a newfound sense of freedom, nonconformity, and resentment toward dogmatic control and establishment. The chapter starts with an exploration of the historic and the theological milieu that surrounded the birth of Adventism; focussing in particular on how Jesus Christ relates to the Godhead. The chapter continues with an analysis of how Protestant denominations such as Anabaptism, Restorationism, Methodism and Deism had set the stage for Adventist Christology, by creating a fertile ground for theological debates, and also by challenging the incremental shift from Arianism to Trinitarianism. In doing so, special attention will be given to the role played by the Millerites (particularly by Ellen G. White) in changing the direction of the Adventist dogmatic discourse in the aftermath of the 1888 Conference, which will be further explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

The third chapter continues the historical analysis of the Christological debates delineated by the second chapter, through an exploration of the religious background of the new converts who apparently paved the way toward the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology. Focussing on the Righteous by Faith Conference held in 1888, in Minneapolis, and on the Trinitarian impulses that surfaced during the Conference and in its aftermath, this chapter illustrates how the 1888 events represented the peak of the dogmatic tensions between Arianism and Trinitarianism, and spearheaded the later adoption of Trinitarian doctrine. The chapter offers key information on the main

ingredients of the debates, the theological background of the pioneers of Adventism along with the official Christology of the time, the anti-creedal stance of Adventism, and the state of the Church which is analyzed from the perspective of the main actors and their theological ideas. It also highlights the powerful influence of Ellen G. White as a shadow negotiator of Trinitarianism, along the simmering resentments built against her by the supporters of Arian Christology. Last but not least, the chapter illustrates the aftershocks of the “Minneapolis syndrome” and the role played by W.W. Prescott, A. G. Daniels, and E. G. White, which led to the post-1888 statements of adoption of the Trinitarian doctrine. Contextualized by this formulation of the Trinitarian Christology, we will prioritize the work of Dr. Ellet J Waggoner (which will be further explored in the next chapters), due to its surprising resonance with Eastern Christianity, and due to its potential for opening a significant path of theological dialogue.

Chapter 4

In preparing the transition toward the secondary set of questions explored by this thesis, I will examine Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner’s adoption of Trinitarian Christology, which in my view, appears to have been derived not necessarily from the new trend of thinking of the younger generation that surrounded the Righteous by Faith Conference of 1888, but more so from Waggoner’s own understanding of the doctrine of justification. As it appears, Dr. Waggoner’s doctrine of justification served as a stepping stone toward the new conclusions he reached from studying the Scripture; conclusions which led him to the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology.

In my view, Waggoner’s conceptualization of justification can be defined in the following terms. *Based on the eternal principle of the Initiative of God (as derived from the Protoevangelium), it is not justification asking for a certain level of Justifier, but the other way around: The level, the quality, the nature and the status in Godhead of the*

Justified sets the level and the course of Justification. This logic indicates that only a Saviour who is God Himself is willing and able to erase the sin completely.

Therefore, the implicit cross-fertilization with Eastern Christianity will be sustained by exploring a logic that is paramount to Eastern Christianity.

In Waggoner's view, it was not the echelon of justification (as conditioned by the nature of the original sin) that set the bar for humanity to receive a Justifier of a specific rank, but it was God's providence and love for humanity that granted salvation and immortality. This is because the power of the original sin does not determine the act of salvation. On the contrary, God's love for humanity determines the nature of salvation through human faith, as a mechanism of acceptance of the divine gifts.

The chapter begins by introducing E. J. Waggoner's Christology; followed by his logic of Justifier–Justification by Faith, along with the role played by faith backed by works which derived from it. Waggoner's arguments are supported exclusively through solid biblical data that give reference to the divine promise for salvation. With this demonstration in place, I will reach the conclusion that Dr. Waggoner adopted and promoted a Trinitarian Christology as a personal discovery and test of assurance, and with no impact from creedal Catholicism, or from any writer; only the Scripture.

Having Waggoner's Trinitarian Christology clarified on a dogmatic platform, I will then shift toward the secondary cluster of questions which I will attempt to answer from the perspective of political theology. To set the stage of Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity, I will include inter-confessional considerations by drawing parallels between Waggoner's thinking and the Orthodox, with minimal references to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

To enhance cross-analysis and cross-fertilization with Eastern Christianity, the structure of Waggoner's Christology will be further analyzed on a comparative explanatory platform, anchored into an Orthodox frame of reference. In line with the

Justifier's intention proclaimed as divine providence in the Protoevangelium, the chapter will scrutinize Waggoner's Christology on the questions of freedom, evil, sin, punishment, justification and salvation.

Given the fact that the Orthodox frame of reference is used as leverage in analyzing Waggoner's Christology, his argument is further enhanced by occasional inter-confessional considerations, through the highlighting of the Catholic, the Orthodox and the general Protestant perspectives, as dictated by necessity.

As this chapter concludes (in a relative concurrence with the Orthodox platform), Waggoner's identification of the Justifier takes place through an analytic sequence of Old Testament prophecies—that prepared the humanity for the arrival of the Saviour—as well as through New Testament references which confirm the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies about God becoming human. Waggoner's own understanding of the relation between the divine and human will be analyzed in the next chapter which will focus on the questions of *how God became man*, and *how the two natures of Jesus Christ (divine and human) are interrelated in the Person of Christ*.

Chapter 5

The fifth chapter continues the quest for comparative Christology between Adventism and Orthodoxy by focusing exclusively on the theories of *kenosis* and *hypostatic union*, in attempting to answer the secondary set of questions—if the Seventh-day Adventism is ready for a meaningful Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity. Therefore, the main heuristic device for the prospects of such Dialogue will be the exploration of Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner's Christology, which I will contrast and compare with the traditional Orthodox Christology, as explained by three Romanian Orthodox theologians: Dumitru Stăniloae, Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean. The writings of these three Orthodox theologians are representative for Orthodox Christianity because

Orthodox theological education is conducted within the sphere of pan-Orthodox theological consensus,¹⁴ and Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean are the authors of the main standard textbook of *Dogmatic Theology*, used in the Romanian Orthodox Seminaries, which was also published with the approval of the Holy Synod (the chief governing body) of the Romanian Orthodox Church. As for Dumitru Stăniloae, he occupies “a position in present-day Orthodoxy comparable to that of Karl Barth in Protestantism, and Karl Rahner in Roman Catholicism,” as referenced by Kallistos Ware, the former Spalding Lecturer of Eastern Orthodox Studies at the University of Oxford. The Christological comparison will be focused on the doctrines of kenosis and hypostatic union, which in light of strong similarities between the writings of Ellet J. Waggoner (on the Adventist side), and those of Stăniloae, Todoran and Zăgrean (on the Orthodox side), my hope is to demonstrate that Adventist Christology is not only mature enough to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Orthodox Christianity, but it can serve as a platform for improving ecclesiastic relationships in protecting freedom of worship in areas where Orthodox Christianity is numerically superior.

Chapter 6

The final chapter presents the general conclusions of the thesis, as they emerged from the attempt to answer the twin cluster of questions on *why the Seventh-day Adventism adopted a Trinitarian Christology*, and if *the Seventh-day Adventism is ready for a meaningful Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity*. The conclusion will also enlist the limitations of this thesis, as well as the prospects for further research and interconfessional action.

¹⁴ Dimitry Pospelovsky, “Impressions of the Contemporary Russian Orthodox Church: Its Problems and Its Theological Education” in *Religion, State & Society* Vol.23, No.3 (1995): 249–262 (here 253). See also *Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church* of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church held in Crete, on 2016. <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/encyclical-holy-council> (Last accessed on December 19, 2017).

Therefore, it is my hope and wish that I succeeded in making an acceptable contribution to clarify the reasons and the context in which Seventh-day Adventism adopted a Trinitarian Christology, while also setting the stage for a meaningful future Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity. The conclusion also forecasts areas of future research in Comparative Christology, such as Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and Orthodox communion, the role of Virgin Mary, and expand the trend of constructive dialogue into more difficult areas such as Sabbath keeping, second coming of Christ, the relationship between faith and works in human salvation, and afterlife.

Last but not least, in light of my ministerial experience in the Romanian Orthodox cultural setting, and by opening such paths for dialogue, it is my hope that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will cease to be perceived as an American political enterprise, which is heretical and dissonant with the local culture. Through my effort and intellectual contribution to inculturate a new conversation, I hope to encourage others to do the same—both Orthodox and Adventists—thus contributing to a peaceful coexistence, as children of God. By grafting commonalities rather than differences into the conversation, we will help (re)start a positive conversation, which will bypass the humps raised by the politics of difference, and we will do our best in making the world a better place until Christ's return. It is also my hope that other denominations will follow the same route in establishing a fraternal environment for coexistence.

For the record, I would like to state that in the interest of fluency, I avoided the use of he/she in the narrative of this thesis. Therefore, my use of the noun "man" is gender inclusive by default, because it does not refer to "male", but to humanity which includes both male and female.

Chapter 1

The Foundations of Christology

Introduction

1.1 Jesus Christ: Divine or Human?

“What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!” (Mat. 8:27)

By way of introducing the contents of this thesis, this chapter will set the stage for the Trinitarian Christology, by answering the question posed by those who met Jesus and “were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’” (Mark 4:41).

1.2 The Foundations of Christology

The doctrine of Trinitarian Christology was established during the Early Church¹ in response to legitimate questions about the faith, and as a result of various controversies that arose and threatened its unity.²

The idea of a Trinitarian divinity is not only specific to Christianity, as similar conceptualizations appear for instance in the Hindu Trimūrti (in Sanscrit “three forms”)—Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva³— in the Egyptian cosmogony (Osiris, Isis, and Horus),⁴ in the Greek philosophy such as Plotinus’s triad (Body, Intellect, and Soul),⁵ and others.⁶

¹ Franz Dunzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*, Translated by John Bowden (New York: T&T Clark Continuum, 2007), 3–10.

² Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 54–73.

³ Wendy Doniger, ed. *Merriam–Webster’s Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Springfield, MA: Merriam–Webster Inc, 1999), 1108.

⁴ Isidor Todoran, Ioan Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică, manual pentru seminariile teologice* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1991), 115.

⁵ John Dillon, ed. *Plotinus: The Enneads*, abridged edition. trans. Stephan MacKenna (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 439–510.

⁶ Veli–Matti Karkkainen, *Trinity and Revelation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Press, 2016. (Part One, “Triune Revelation” of the volume is particularly applicable in this context.)

As for Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinitarian Christology was developed in the context of various controversies around questions such as: Who was Jesus? What was His role within the context of Jewish Messianic prophecies, and within the salvation of humanity from under the bondage of sin?⁷ Argumentative answers were built on the basis of the Scripture; particularly on the basis of various *theophanies* (or divine revelations) that took place during privileged moments in time.⁸

In conducting a survey of the “historical” or the “normative” Christology, I will enlist some of the most significant resources that emerged in the traditions of Eastern Christianity, such as individual contributions vetted by collective consensus;⁹ thus bearing a stronger social impact. These contributions are also more accurate in maintaining close links with the apostolic tradition, which had a direct encounter with Jesus Christ.

1.2.1 The Pivotal Role of the Scripture

The Scripture itself is the very record of divine revelation, and as such it plays a pivotal role in the charting of the Trinitarian doctrine. In general, theophanies that revealed a Triune God in the scripture can be categorized as revelations of divine *names*, and revelations through *events*.¹⁰

⁷ A reliable overview of the question “Who was Jesus?” is offered by Graham Stanton in his analysis of the philosophical and social context in which the Gospel tradition emerged. Cf. Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, Second Edition. Oxford Bible Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143–162.

⁸ Graham Cole, *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 49–74.

⁹ In terms of Western theological contribution, which is prominent in the Catholic world, Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430) remains a genius of theology whose dogmatic analysis of “the doctrine of the Divine Unity,” which is regarded as, “a truth of natural religion” outshines some of the greatest minds of Christian history. A deeply speculative work, *De Trinitate* was written in fifteen books, and allegedly produced over fifteen years. *De Trinitate* remains as Augustine’s the most sophisticated work. [See. William G.T. Shedd, Introductory Essay to *St. Augustin: On the Trinity*, ed. Arthur Haddan, trans. William G.T. Shedd, in *NPNF Vol. 3 First Series* ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 3.] However, in this dissertation, the doctrine of the Trinity will be explored predominantly from the Eastern perspective, as it was developed during the Early Church in the context of the Ecumenical Councils. Therefore, Augustine’s work will not be the subject of this analysis.

¹⁰ Cf. Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 15–34.

As divine name, the first *theophany* of the Trinity appears at the beginning of the *Book of Genesis*, where God's name is introduced as Elohim ("in the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth," Gen. 1:1)—a name that defines divinity as plurality, by contrast with YHWH, which is an alternative name that defines divinity as singularity; as it appears later in the Book of Genesis.¹¹ The second theophany appears also in the context of creation, whereby humanity was created as a result of an intrinsic divine council "Let *us* make" (Gen. 3:15), as opposed to 'let me make'. The third theophany is registered during the Babel event, where the plural is used again in reference to God, "Come, let *us* go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." (Gen. 11:7) The fourth Trinitarian theophany appears this time in the New Testament, in the missionary baptismal commandment, "therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matt. 28:19), as well as in the Pauline greeting, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14).

As event, the first theophany of the Trinity appears at the Oak of Mamre, during the event when Abraham was visited by the Lord in the form of three angels, and Abraham spoke to them as being only one.¹²

"The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, 'If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.'"

(Gen. 18: 1–3)

The second theophany in the form of an event appears in the New Testament, in the context of the Baptism of Jesus at Jordan River,¹³ where the voice of the Father was heard from above, while the Holy Spirit descended as a dove.

¹¹ For a Jewish perspective on the Trinity see, Ben Shlomo, *Elohim: They are God: Poly-Monotheism. How Three Became God Through Moses and the Prophets*. New York: Sefer Press Publishing House, 2015.

¹² Cf. F. Nigel Hepper and Shimon Gibson, "Abraham's Oak Of Mamre: The Story of a Venerable Tree," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 126.2 (1994): 94–105.

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.¹⁴ And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’” (Matt. 13:16–17)

These theophanies had been of cardinal importance not only as speculative guideposts for dogmatic development, but also as crucial elements of salvation.

1.2.2 Arius and the Raise of Arianism

Within the narrative of human salvation from under the bondage of sin, the question of Saviour took a leading role. In the Mediterranean world, the identity of Jesus endured a severe stress test during the early years of Christianity.¹⁵ To be sure, the preaching of a crucified man, who resurrected from the dead, was a scandal to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek. (1 Cor. 1:23) However, it was not so for the allegoric mind of the Alexandrine, for it was possible for a man to be the incarnation of the Almighty One. Yet, not all of the Alexandrines agreed, as it was the one particular case of a priest Arius who thought otherwise.

It all started when infamous Arius (c.250–c.336) began an argument with his bishop, Athanasius of Alexandria, about the divinity of Jesus.¹⁶ Arius believed that, given the majesty of God’s self-existence, sovereignty, immutability and transcendence, it was logically impossible for God to be present in human form. The only compromise that brought comfort to Arius’s thinking in this sense was that if the

¹³ Cf. Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 57–68.

¹⁴ Cf. Leroy H. Stafford, *The Function of the Divine Manifestations In The New Testament Times* (Menasha: George Banta Publishing, 1919), 24–33.

¹⁵ Cf. Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 13–26.

¹⁶ The literature on Arian controversy is vast. While historically doomed as the arch-heretic, Arius’s image has been reevaluated recently by various theologians such as Maurice Wiles, “In Defense of Arius,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1963): 339–347; as well as Robert Gregg and Dennis Groh, “The Centrality of Soteriology in Early Arianism,” *Anglican Theological Review* 59 (1977): 260–278. Another significant work on this trend is Thomas A. Kopecek’s, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979. (As a general reference, this work is recommended to be studied in its entirety, as no particularization of its contents is necessary in the context of this thesis.)

Son (Jesus Christ) was divine, then He was divinized by His association with God, and as such, the Son remained subordinated to God, just like a son is submissive to his father by virtue of age and authority.¹⁷ Arius also agreed that the Son was indeed a perfect creature, but He was not eternal, because “there was once when he was not”—*en pote hote ouk en*—as Arius’s supporters were allegedly chanting.¹⁸ Most of Arius’s writings were lost and destroyed, and whatever did survive were mere fragments used by his accusers to condemn him. As with any power struggle, the defeated bears as much the weight of “guilt”, as the weight of the libel itself.

Arius had a strong personality and an unusual intelligence, which combined with his stubborn way of life, he attracted numerous followers. His followers not only agreed with him, but they defended him vehemently against the bishop, to the extent that this quarrel disturbed the harmony of the Church far beyond the city borders of Alexandria; becoming historically known as “the archetype heresy.”¹⁹

Through poetry and hymns, the followers of Arius disseminated three fundamental ideas, namely that:

- 1) the Son can be called God only as a courtesy title,
- 2) the Son was created (not begotten) by the Father, and
- 3) the Son achieved the divine status through perfect obedience to the Father.

As the suffix “-ism” suggests, Arian-ism was apparently branded by bishop Athanasius of Alexandria as a preposterous system of belief. In making a connection between the movement and its protagonist, Athanasius made an acid statement in his

¹⁷ Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition: Volume One, From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, second revised edition. trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 219–248.

¹⁸ Stuart G. Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church*, 2nd Edition. (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 124.

¹⁹ Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1–51.

Defense Against the Arians, by writing, “Arius, from whom the heresy of the Arian madmen has its name.”²⁰

Nevertheless, the defeat at Nicaea was only a lost battle for Arianism because it quickly returned; this time through imperial espousal.

Arianism collapsed only when Emperor Gratian (A.D. 367–383) and Emperor Theodosius I (A.D. 379–395) came to the defense of the non-Arians, and a significant council—to be later recognized as “the Second Ecumenical Council”—met in Constantinople, in A.D. 381, where the Nicene Creed was amended and allegedly approved as the final dogmatic settlement.²¹

Discredited, condemned, repudiated and made illegal, Arian beliefs kept a foothold within the Germanic tribes until the end of the seventh century.²² It was revived during the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries by the Socinians (“Transylvanian Unitarians” or “Polish Brethrens”), who raised arguments similar to Arius, and later, by the Unitarians from England and America who maintained a limbo attitude; neither reducing Christ to a human being, nor by attributing Him a divine nature identical to that of the Father.²³

All these historic cases highlight the mere ebb and flow which the Seventh-day Adventism had experienced in its dogmatic journey—an ironical sympathy with Eastern Christianity to be sure.

1.2.3 Preconditions for Defining Trinitarian Christology

Beyond Arianism, the Early Church faced additional ambiguities in defining Trinity—also with regard to the Holy Spirit—and as such, the Church had to reach a common

²⁰ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Select Writings and Letters*, ed. Archibald Robertson, in *NPNF, Vol. 4* Second Series, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 103.

²¹ Arnold Ehrhardt, “The First Two Years of the Emperor Theodosius I,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Volume 15, Issue 1 April (1964): 1–17.

²² Cf. Rochelle Snee, “Gregory Nazianzen’s Anastasia Church: Arianism, the Goths, and Hagiography,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* Vol. 52 (1998): 157–186.

²³ The Editors, “Arianism,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed March 9, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arianism>.

ground by giving the doctrine of Trinity its fixity.²⁴ With regard to the Son of God, the various attempts made not only by the scandalized Jews, who declined to accept Jesus Christ as their expected Messiah, but also by various groups of Christians and intellectuals who deliberately downplayed the belief that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of the Almighty, raised an unanimous dilemma concerning the validity of salvation. Simply put, if Jesus Christ was not God, than the faith in Him was pure delusion, and a lost hope.²⁵

The main protagonists who defended a Trinitarian God included Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Aristides, Justin, Athenagoras, Theophil of Antioch, Irenæus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Novatian, and others. Those who wrote specifically against Arianism were Athanasius (*On the Incarnation of the Word*, and *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Patrologia Graeca XXVI, col. 1000); Tertullian (*Against Praxeas*, Patrologia Latina II, col. 156, 188), Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oration 33 Against The Arians, and Concerning Himself*, Patrologia Graeca XXXVI, col. 236 A), Cyril of Alexandria (*On the Holy Trinity*, 7, Patrologia Graeca LXX, col. 192), Epiphanius of Salamis (*Ancoratus*), Illarius, and Augustine.²⁶

1.2.4 Political Aspects and Doctrinal Unity

Because Christianity grew into an astonishing faith phenomenon, by the third century its theological controversies started impacting imperial stability. For the political power this phenomenon represented an opportunity which had to be capitalized upon and

²⁴ Cf. Richard Patrick Crosland Hanson, *The Search for The Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, New York: T&T Clark, 2005. [I recommend the fourth part of this volume, which includes the following relevant chapters: “The controversy resolved” (Ch 20), “Athanasius and his heirs” (Ch 21), “The Cappadocian Theologians” (Ch 22), “The doctrine of the spirit” (Ch 23), and “The council of Constantinople” (Ch 24).]

²⁵ Cf. Sheila E. McGinn, *The Jesus Movement and the World of the Early Church* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2014), 25–55.

²⁶ For a Catholic spin on the Doctrine of the Trinity, see Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God*, trans. Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 111–158.

institutionalized as such.²⁷ Therefore, in the interest of conformity, the doctrines of the Church had to be clearly defined, defended, legislated and universalized in line with the general beliefs preserved by the multiplicity of traditional resources.

The Civil Law and the Canon Law (religious laws) evolved as analogous projects, and they often influenced each other.²⁸

Under the Byzantine state, religious laws were treated as state laws and were codified in the form of *Nomocanons*, *State Codexes*, *Novelae* (civil laws regulating dogmatic decisions of the Church), *Institutiones*, *Ecloga*, *Prohiron*, *Epanagoga*, *Basilicalae*, and *Hexabiblos*.²⁹ The legislative power of the *Novelae* made it a crime for any Christian to confess a different doctrine.³⁰

The doctrinal support that the Church received from the empire was of mutual benefit to Church–State relations, and it was crucial in reconciling the pacifist message of Jesus Christ with the lethal imperial power.³¹

Doctrines were further imposed through various mechanisms of artistic representation such as iconography, poetry and hymnography. Furthermore, the doctrines were reinforced through the power of ritual; a human phenomenon known to create consensus within a community of believers.³²

²⁷ James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews, A History* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), 237–245.

²⁸ Philip Schaff, “Excursus on the History of the Roman Law and its Relation to the Canon Law,” in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, in *NPNF Second Series*, Vol.14 Second Series, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 24–35.

²⁹ Ioan N. Floca, *Drept Canonic Ortodox, Legislație și Administrație Bisericească*, vol.1 (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1990), 70–150.

³⁰ See also Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453*, New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 2000. (See chapter 10 titled “Religion and Law.”)

³¹ Marian Gh. Simion, “War and the Right to Life: Orthodox Christian Perspectives,” in *Religion and Public Policy: Human Rights, Conflict, and Ethics*, eds. Sumner Twiss, Marian Gh. Simion, Rodney L. Petersen (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 188–206.

³² As J.D Crichton writes, “rite also enabled people to relate to the community of which they were part, and all primitive worship was communal worship.” J.D. Crichton, “Theology of Worship,” in *The Study of Liturgy*, revised edition, eds. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, SJ, and Paul Bradshaw (London: SPCK/New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 8.

1.2.5 The Formulation of the Trinitarian Doctrine in the Early Church

Under imperial authority, two “ecumenical” (lit. “of the entire world”) councils met and gave the doctrine of the Trinity its fixity, by establishing that Jesus Christ is truly divine and truly human, and by eliminating not only the Arian heresy, but other heresies as well.³³ The doctrine of Trinity was codified in the *Symbol of Faith* which consists of seven articles formulated during the Council of Nicaea (A.D.325), and amended by five more articles allegedly written during the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381).

During the Trinitarian doctrinal debates, there was a continuous effort to identify the most appropriate logic to articulate the complexity of the relationship between the three Persons of the Trinity. This had to be defined in the most specific terms for purpose of clarity and conformity. Some of the terms that served an instrumental role during the debates included “unity”, “trinity”, “being”, “essence”, “nature”, “substance”, “hypostasis”, “person”, “ousia”, and so forth. Terms such as “nature”, “physis” were generally considered to be synonymous with “being” or “essence”; pointing to the matter from which something is made.³⁴

As Basil the Great explained in his *Epistle 38* addressed to his brother Gregory of Nyssa, the distinction between “ousia” (the essence) and “hypostasis” (particularity) was like the distinction between *manhood* and a *specific man*.³⁵

Apart from the need for clarity in defining and codifying the dogma of the Trinity in the *Creed*, John of Damascus later shed some additional light over this enigmatic

³³ Stephen W. Need, *Truly Divine and Truly Human: The Story of Christ and the Seven Ecumenical Councils* (London, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 2008), 41–62.

³⁴ Mark S. G. Nestlehuett, “Chalcedonian Christology: Modern Criticism and Contemporary Ecumenism,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* Vol. 35, No. 2 Spring (1998): 175–196.

³⁵ “My statement, then, is this,” wrote Basil the Great. “That which is spoken of in a special and peculiar manner is indicated by the name of the hypostasis. Suppose we say ‘a man.’ The indefinite meaning of the word strikes a certain vague sense upon the ears. The nature is indicated, but what subsists and is specially and peculiarly indicated by the name is not made plain. Suppose we say ‘Paul.’ We set forth, by what is indicated by the name, the nature subsisting.” See Basil the Great, *The Treatise the Spiritu Sancto, the Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *NPNF, Vol. 8 Second Series*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 137.

proposition, in his *Exposition to the Faith*, which was written with the intent to summarize the dogmatic teachings of the Church.³⁶

Regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son, John of Damascus clarifies that,

“The Godhead is not compound but in three perfect subsistences, one perfect indivisible and uncompounded God. And when I think of the relation of the three subsistences to each other, I perceive that the Father is super-essential Sun, source of goodness, fathomless sea of essence, reason, wisdom, power, light, divinity: the generating and productive source of good hidden in it. He Himself then is mind, the depth of reason, begetter of the Word, and through the Word the Producer of the revealing Spirit. And to put it shortly, the Father has no reason, wisdom, power, will, save the Son Who is the only power of the Father, the immediate cause of the creation of the universe: as perfect subsistence begotten of perfect subsistence in a manner known to Himself, Who is and is named the Son.”³⁷

Furthermore, in a doctrinal summation, John of Damascus, explained the relationship between the persons of the Trinity.³⁸

The doctrine of Trinity encountered a remarkable excursus of acute theological debates and terminological orientations, which ended once for all with the formulation of the Creed.³⁹ Therefore, once fixed as a dogma, all ambiguities had allegedly ceased to exist since it became a theological taboo—never to be questioned ever again. If anyone doubted this dogma, one took the irreversible risk of losing one’s personal salvation, or to be declared a heretic, and excommunicated.

³⁶ “God then is called Mind and Reason and Spirit and Wisdom and Power,”—wrote John of Damascus—“as the cause of these, and as immaterial, and maker of all, and omnipotent. And these names are common to the whole Godhead, whether affirmative or negative. And they are also used of each of the subsistences of the Holy Trinity in the very same and identical way and with their full significance. For when I think of one of the subsistences, I recognize it to be perfect God and perfect essence: but when I combine and reckon the three together, I know one perfect God.” See, John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, trans. S.D.F. Salmond, in *NPNF Vol. 9 Second Series*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 14.

³⁷ John of Damascus, *Exposition*, 14–15.

³⁸ As John of Damascus wrote, “the Holy Spirit is the power of the Father revealing the hidden mysteries of His Divinity, proceeding from the Father through the Son in a manner known to Himself, but different from that of generation. Wherefore the Holy Spirit is the perfecter of the creation of the universe. All the terms, then, that are appropriate to the Father, as cause, source, begetter, are to be ascribed to the Father alone: while those that are appropriate to the caused, begotten Son, Word, immediate power, will, wisdom, are to be ascribed to the Son: and those that are appropriate to the caused, processional, manifesting, perfecting power, are to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Father is the source and cause of the Son and the Holy Spirit: Father of the Son alone and producer of the Holy Spirit. The Son is Son, Word, Wisdom, Power, Image, Effulgence, Impress of the Father and derived from the Father. But the Holy Spirit is not the Son of the Father but the Spirit of the Father as proceeding from the Father. For there is no impulse without Spirit. And we speak also of the Spirit of the Son, not as through proceeding from Him, but as proceeding through Him from the Father. For the Father alone is cause.” Ibid., 15.

³⁹ Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Vol.4 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 64–71.

This formulation was also an expression of the unity and unanimity of the Church in its effort to resonate with the prophecies of the Old Testament, the teachings of Christ, political interests, communal stability, and perhaps common sense. Therefore, this had to be the result of the collective wisdom which could only be achieved through the consensus of a synod, or council.⁴⁰

One must also note that Adventism was less likely to engage such philosophical complexities for the simple fact that it lacked the intellectual interests of its theological elites to move in this direction, and it also lacked the political milieu that would make the extrapolation on such philosophical nuances necessary. Furthermore, the sociological context in which Adventism evolved was dominated by a different sense of power distance and power distribution, whereby the monarchic transfer of power from the king to his son was obsolete. As such, the Adventists operated only with the general label of “Arianism” which they inherited historically, and which, for them, contained far less intrigue than it did for the Early Christians.

1.2.6 The Ecumenical Councils

The idea of a council emerged from the fact that Jesus sent his apostles to spread a unified message, and as such, the apostles themselves became interdependent in preserving the memory of the events, and the accuracy of the message. As structure, the council served also as an instrument used to clarify, rectify and impose the accurate teachings, and avoid interpretations that were considered dangerous. As such, the apostles themselves first met in A.D. 50 in Jerusalem (Acts 15) to counter the separation anxiety from Judaism—particularly with regard to the once pre-required circumcision of the Gentiles—along with various restrictions concerning eating meat of animals sacrificed at pagan temples, and

⁴⁰ Rodney Stark, “The Class Basis of Early Christianity: Inferences From a Sociological Model,” *Sociology of Religion* 47, no. 3 (1986): 216–225.

moral restrictions on fornication and idolatry. This meeting had become known as the *Apostolic Council*, or the *Council of Jerusalem*.⁴¹

Nevertheless, for a council to be considered *Ecumenical*, it was necessary that the council be the imprint of a sophisticated emerging structure, and regional representation. It had to be representative of the entire world (oikumene) and it had to include the accredited decision makers on matter of faith and church policy. In the history of Christianity, only seven such “Ecumenical Councils” had been unanimously recognized by the entire Christianity.⁴²

1.2.6.1 The Council of Nicaea

The first Ecumenical Council met in Nicaea⁴³ in A.D. 325 (today Iznik in Turkey) primarily to examine and discuss the teachings of Arius, as well as to attend to various moral and pastoral matters that needed regulation. The participants were predominantly from the eastern part of the Roman Empire with an arguably low participation from Rome.⁴⁴

1.2.6.2 The Power of homoousios (ὁμοούσιος)

In order to carefully navigate between various interpretations of the divinity of Jesus—interpretations considered heretical at that time—the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea had to conduct a difficult excursus in finding words with precision. Taking for example the word ὁμοούσιος⁴⁵—which signifies the same nature and substance, but with a distinction between persons—it was a difficult endeavor to adopt it, and make it the official “orthodox” formula that would end the debates. It was difficult to adopt it as the

⁴¹ Alex TM Cheung, “A narrative analysis of Acts 14: 27-15: 35: literary shaping in Luke’s account of the Jerusalem council,” *The Westminster theological journal* 55 no. 1 (1993): 137–154.

⁴² Cf. Norman P. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A Short History*, New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001. (It is recommended that this expose on the councils be studied in its entirety as it gives also references to councils that Eastern Christianity refuses to consider as ecumenical.)

⁴³ Aristeides Papadakis, “Nicaea I,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1464–5.

⁴⁴ The Editors, “Council of Nicaea,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, accessed March 9, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Council-of-Nicaea-Christianity-325>.

⁴⁵ John Moorhead, “What names did the Anti-Nicenes use for Catholics and Arians?,” *Augustinianum* 50, no. 2 (2010): 423–441.

compromising term mainly because of the notoriety (or credibility) of the specific theologians who made use of it in their discourses. First, because ὁμοούσιος was used by a known heretic, Paul of Samosata, the word was offensive to the Asian Churches. It was suspected of being open to the Sabellian heresy, and it was rejected by a local council in Antioch.⁴⁶ At the same time, ὁμοούσιος was used four times by Irenæus of Lyons and twice by Tertullian in Latin version (*unius substantiæ*), and as such the term was quite common and acceptable among the orthodox.⁴⁷

Therefore, pushed by the political circumstances, motivated by the need for religious unity, and also persuaded by Athanasius of Alexandria, the Council adopted the word ὁμοούσιος and included it in the formulation of the Creed.⁴⁸ Thus, ὁμοούσιος became part of the Creed and defined Jesus Christ as Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, “true God from true God,” who was γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, “begotten not made,” and also ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ “of one essence with the Father.”

1.2.6.3 The First Council of Constantinople

Because the Council of Nicaea had only clarified the divinity of Jesus Christ, a new theological current started denying the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the unresolved disputes between the Eusebians and the Nicenes that occurred until the death of Emperor Constans raised additional concerns for disunity within the Church.⁴⁹

In A.D. 367 some *Homoousians* led by Silvanos of Tarsos and Eustathios of Sebasteia, wanting to receive credit for the charismatic experience of their ascetic life

⁴⁶ Percival, *Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 3–4.

⁴⁷ It is alleged that during the Council, Athanasius of Alexandria insisted that this word was the most appropriate one, by explaining, “that the Son is not only like to the Father, but that, as his image, he is the same as the Father; that he is of the Father; and that the resemblance of the Son to the Father, and his immutability, are different from ours: for in us they are something acquired, and arise from our fulfilling the divine commands. Moreover, they wished to indicate by this that his generation is different from that of human nature; that the Son is not only like to the Father, but inseparable from the substance of the Father, that he and the Father are one and the same, as the Son himself said: The Logos is always in the Father, and, the Father always in the Logos,” as the sun and its splendour are inseparable.” Ibid., 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 3–4.

⁴⁹ Leo D. Davis SJ. *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325–787) Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983), 81–133.

(which they considered to be the manifestation of the Spirit), decided to make public their wish to remain ambiguous about the Holy Spirit. This ambiguity made them even more suspicious in the eyes of Athanasius of Alexandria who wanted to exclude them from the Church. This group, which also promoted semi-Arian views, had quickly earned the derogatory label of “Pneumatomachoi,” or Macedonians after Makedonios of Constantinople; another spiritual leader that they followed.

The Pneumatomachoi (Πνευματομάχοι, “those who fought [the divinity of] the Spirit”), taught that the Holy Spirit was not a divine Person of one essence with the Father and with the Son, but represented the gift of God, or was a created being.⁵⁰

This Council was not intended to be ecumenical at all. It was only by year A.D. 451 that the Council was deemed important enough to be universally accepted as ecumenical. This was so because this Council had completed the initial version of the Creed of Nicaea with teachings about the Holy Spirit, the Church, sacraments, and the belief in resurrection and the everlasting life; teachings which found reception in the entire world, and were universally accepted. In fact, this Council was a local gathering of only one hundred and fifty bishops, it was not summoned by the pope, and no Western diocese (including the See of Rome) was represented by a bishop, or any representative.

Even though the acts of this Council either never existed or did not survive,⁵¹ it is credited as having made creedal decisions.⁵²

⁵⁰ Karl-Heinz Uthemann, “Pneumatomachoi”, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1688.

⁵¹ Cf. C. H. Turner, “Canons Attributed to the Council of Constantinople, AD 381, Together with the Names of the Bishops, From Two Patmos MSS POB’POT’,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (1913): 161–178. See also, Hubertus R. Drobner, “The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction,” *HTS Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (2008): 669–669.

⁵² First, it endorsed the faith of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, and also appended it with five more articles, which were recognized during the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. Second, it added to the Creed something that was originally known as a local baptismal formula. This formula recognized the full consubstantiality and divinity of the Holy Spirit. Third, the Council condemned both Pneumatomachoi and the Apolinarians, and it proclaimed Constantinople as the second see of Christendom as having honorary precedence over all other sees—simply “because it is New Rome”

1.2.6.4 The Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed

In a general sense, the Creed is a brief statement of faith, or an exposition of the principles of Christian belief meant to define, in a unified form, the core teachings of the faith. Although during early Christianity, the Apostles' Creed enjoyed a prominent status; in reality every major Church had its own local symbol of faith that was necessary for the missionary work of the Church.⁵³ Some creeds were simply reduced to a baptismal statement.⁵⁴

During the first two Ecumenical Councils, the Church Fathers articulated the faith in what came to be known as the Creed, or the Symbol of Nicaea (Σύμβολον τῆς Νικαίας, Symbolum Nicaenum), or the Symbol of Faith (Σύμβολον τῆς πίστεως). The first seven articles of this official Creed were adopted at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, and then amended by five more articles during what came to be recognized as the Second Ecumenical Council, in Constantinople, in A.D. 381. With the promulgation of the Creed it is considered that the Trinitarian doctrine was completely clarified and defined.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, while the Greek version remained relatively accurate within the Eastern Christianity, the Latin version was later modified by the West, with the insertion of the *Filioque* formula, mainly as missionary attempt to prompt the official Christology over against the Arians in the West.⁵⁶

(Canon 3)—except for old Rome, of course. See, Aristeides Papadakis, “Constantinople I,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 512.

⁵³ Thomas J. Farrell, “Early Christian Creeds and Controversies in the Light of the Orality–Literacy Hypothesis,” *Oral tradition* 2, no. 1 (1987): 132–149.

⁵⁴ As a rule, it was mandatory for a catechumen to understand and be able to recite the creed prior to receiving baptism. Yet, given the raise of dogmatic disagreements, it was also necessary to ensure a universal standardization of belief. See, Charles King, “The Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs,” *Classical Antiquity* 22, no. 2 (2003): 275–312.

⁵⁵ As it is known today, the Creed consists of twelve articles that focus on four general statements that define the belief in God as Trinity (art. 1–8), the definition of the Church (art. 9), the role of the Sacraments (art. 10), and the hope in the everlasting life (art. 11–12).

⁵⁶ Harriet E. Baber, “Trinity, Filioque and Semantic Ascent,” *Sophia* 47, no. 2 (2008): 149–160.

1.2.7 Nestorianism vs. Monophysitism

With Jesus Christ recognized both as *God* (true God from true God)—and as *man* (was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man), new questions surfaced with regard to the relationship between the divine nature and the human nature in Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

The main dilemma was this: If, before the incarnation, the divine nature of the Logos existed separately, what kind of union was created, once the divine nature came in contact with the human nature, after the incarnation? Was the mixture between the divine and the human full, or apparent? Did the human nature prevail? Did the divine nature prevail?⁵⁸ Therefore, new theological doctrines attempted to find a logic solution to the relationship between the human nature and the divine nature.

In order to explain Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39–46), and also emphasize that Christ has indeed suffered to save humanity, a theologian, Nestorius, taught that the human nature of Jesus Christ has engulfed the divine nature. His opponents falsely accused Nestorius (and his followers) of acknowledging the existence of two distinct sons of God; a charge that they all denied.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the Nestorians were defeated and condemned during the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus in A.D. 431, but their teachings remained safeguarded by some “Nestorian” churches that survived in Persia and Syria. In A.D. 612 the Nestorians held their own synod which accepted the doctrine of one-image-in-two-

⁵⁷ Susan Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint and of a Heretic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1–14; 255–294.

⁵⁸ Rebecca J. Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. (Given these fundamental questions I recommend reading Lyman's work in its entirety, as it offers a refreshed interpretation of the link between Greek philosophy and Early Christian theology by exploring thinkers such as Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Athanasius.)

⁵⁹ Henry Chadwick, “Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* (1951): 145–164.

hypostases in Christ, and rejected that Virgin Mary should be called *Theotokos* (Birthgiver of God), but be called *Anthropotokos* (Birthgiver of Man.)⁶⁰

Reacting to Nestorianism, a new group, the Monophysites⁶¹ (Μονοφυσίτης)—*monos* (one) *physis* (nature)—emphasized the union of two natures in Christ, in which human nature was engulfed by the divine nature.⁶² Monophysitism was condemned by the Fourth Ecumenical Council held in A.D. 451 (October 8–31) in Chalcedon. Among various decisions related to the status of Constantinople and the recognition of the Creed, the Council of Chalcedon also elaborated the Dyophysite Formula, which defined Christ's two natures as “inviolably united without confusion, division, separation, or change, in one person or hypostasis.”⁶³ Later, the Monophysites (Μονοφυσίτης) received support from Emperor Anastasios I, but lost it with Emperor Justinian I, who favored the Dyophysite Chalcedonians, and persecuted the Monophysites;⁶⁴ making them vulnerable to welcoming foreign enemies, such as they did with the Islamic Arabs.⁶⁵

The consequences of Chalcedon led to a first schism between the Chalcedonians, today known as Eastern Orthodox, and the non-Chalcedonians or Monophysites—today's Oriental Orthodox. Today, the Monophysite Churches represent about 60 million people and they include the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the

⁶⁰ Alexander Kazhdan, “Nestorianism,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1459–60.

⁶¹ Patrick T.R. Gray, *Leontius of Jerusalem: Against the Monophysites: Testimonies of the Saints and Aporiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 15–19.

⁶² The Monophysites were split between the Real Monophysites and the Verbal Monophysites; each suggesting its own response. The Real Monophysites inclined to accept the doctrine of the union of the two natures, and the Verbal Monophysites saw in Christ a new and unique nature that possessed the perfect divine and the perfect human qualities. Due to the growing political mistrust between Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome, the Monophysites became suspected of heresy, and the disputes began in the 440s.

⁶³ Aristeides Papadakis, “Council of Chalcedon,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 404.

⁶⁴ Leslie S.B. MacCoull, “‘When Justinian Was Upsetting the World’: A Note on Soldiers and Religious Coercion in Sixth-Century Egypt,” in *Peace and War in Byzantium, Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, eds. Timothy S. Miller and John Nesbitt (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1995), 106–113.

⁶⁵ John C. Block, “Philoponian Monophysitism in South Arabia at the Advent of Islam With Implications for the English Translation of ‘Thalātha’ in Qur’ān 4:171 and 5:73,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23.1 (2012): 50–75. See also Alexander Kazhdan, “Monophysitism,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1398–9.

East, The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, The Coptic Orthodox Church, The Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, The Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia), The Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin), and The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church—all members of the World Council of Churches.⁶⁶

1.2.8 The Filioque Clause

From the fourth to the eighth century, the Church taught the doctrine of the Trinity as was allegedly formulated during the first two Ecumenical Councils. The accepted versions of the Creed stated that the Son “proceeds from the Father” (τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον or *Patre procedentem*).

However, given the persistence of Arianism among the Goths,⁶⁷ some missionaries added the formula “and from the Son” (*Filioque*) for the purpose of increasing the prestige of the Son among the Arians, by giving the Son the authority over the Holy Spirit. Their strongest argument was derived apparently from the Gospel of John, where it is stated that, “when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedes from the Father, he shall testify of me.” (John 15:26) Therefore, to convince the Arians, the missionaries⁶⁸ interposed “*Filioque*” between *Patre* and *procedentem*, which would read “*Patre Filioque procedentem*” meaning “who proceeds from the Father and [from] the Son.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Cf. World Council of Churches, *Orthodox Churches (Oriental)*, accessed March 13, 2017, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/church-families/orthodox-churches-oriental>.

⁶⁷ Cf. Peter Heather, “The crossing of the Danube and the Gothic Conversion,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 27 no. 3 (1986): 289. See also, Hagith Sivan, “Ulfila’s Own Conversion,” *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 04 (1996): 373–386.

⁶⁸ Gerald Bray, “The Filioque Clause in History and Theology,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 34, no. 91 (1983): 143.

⁶⁹ Hilary Gatti and Frances Yates, “The Notes on ‘Camillo and Hermes Trismegistus’ in the Yates Archive at the Warburg Institute in London,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere e Filosofia* 6 no. 1 (2001): 171–193.

The Filioque clause was adopted at a Spanish Council of Toledo in A.D. 589, and relatively ignored in the East. However, when the Frankish missionaries used this formula in the 9th century Bulgaria, strong polemics erupted between the Latins and the Greeks.⁷⁰

The propagation of the Filioque clause was accelerated and solidified due to the political rifts between Rome and Byzantium, which contributed to yet another split of Christianity—known as the Schism of 1054—which separated Christianity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Today, the Filioque clause still appears as a legitimate doctrine.⁷¹

The Catholics also claim that the Filioque clause is part of an Alexandrian tradition that was confessed dogmatically in A.D. 447, four years before the Council of Chalcedon had recognized officially the Nicaeo–Constantinopolitan Creed, in A.D. 451.⁷²

The theological positions built by each side to defend or refute the Filioque clause were mainly based on the interpretation of texts from the Scripture and the interpretation of some historical records.⁷³

Considering the scripture-based arguments, while the Catholics insisted that the authority of the Son over the Holy Spirit was implicit in the Gospel of John which states:

“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me” (John 5:26),

⁷⁰ Patriarch Photios of Constantinople condemned this doctrine of “double procession,” at a council he organized during 879–880 (a.k.a. The Photian Council), and the legates of Pope John VIII accepted the decisions of this council, which stated that “the Creed cannot be subtracted from, added to, altered or distorted in any way.” It is generally believed that the Filioque clause was accepted in Rome in 1014, and then affirmed as legitimate by the councils of Lyons (1274), and Ferrara–Florence (1438–39). See, John Meyendorff, “Filioque,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 785–6.

⁷¹ According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “the Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit ‘proceeds from the Father and the Son (filioque).’ The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: ‘The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son; He has his nature and subsistence at once (simul) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and through one aspiration . . . and, since Father has through generation given to the only-begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.’” See, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, ed. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana/Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 65.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

the Orthodox objected by saying that Jesus was referring to the Pentecost, which an event limited in time, and not to proceeding as an eternal reality.⁷⁴ Second, the Catholics argued that if the Holy Spirit did not proceed *also* from the Son, then the Son would have no authority to send the Holy Spirit in the world. The Orthodox counterargument came via a text from the Gospel of Luke, which states:

“the Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.” (Luke 4:18)

Therefore, by the logic of this Catholic argument, the Orthodox objected and argued that it would lead to the implication that the Son proceeds from the Holy Spirit; yet another aberration.⁷⁵ Third, the Catholics took the expression “it is from me that he will receive,” from the Gospel of John, to imply that the Son has authority over the Holy Spirit.

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.” (John 16:12–14)

The Orthodox counterargument was that the text refers to the restorative activity of the Trinity as a whole.⁷⁶ Fourth, the Catholics took the expression “the Spirit of Christ” from Paul’s Letter to the Romans as an alternative reference to the Holy Spirit, which implies that the Son has authority over the Holy Spirit.

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.” (Romans 8:9)

The Orthodox responded that the context in which such an expression is used refers to the co-substantiality of the Persons of the Trinity.⁷⁷ Last but not least, the Catholics insisted that the text from the Gospel of John “and with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit,’” (John 20:22) indicates that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from

⁷⁴ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 142.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 142–143.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 143–4.

the Son, and the Orthodox replied that the text refers to Christ's dual nature (divine and human), and the breathing on the apostles was a symbolic human act.⁷⁸

For Adventism, the debates over the Holy Spirit have been rather obscure, as the divinity of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity was far less contested. On the other hand, the Christological debates were so acute mainly because they involved the relationship between their divine and the human, as relevant for salvation and for the achievement of the everlasting life.

1.2.9 The Orthodox Definition of the Trinitarian Christology

As we reach the conclusions of this detailed excursus into the foundations of Trinitarian Christology, its history and debates that led to its formulation, it is important to chart what came to be recognize as the classical, or the official version of the Trinity, as preserved by the Eastern Orthodox Church; a Church that claims to stand closest to the original beliefs of the Apostolic age.

This formulation has allegedly been preserved by the Eastern Orthodox Church, which will be held as standard for comparison with Trinitarian Adventism. While mapping the basic concepts that make up the doctrine of the Trinity, we will also list the basic positions considered as erroneous or heretical, and which had been rejected at various points in time by consensus.

1.2.9.1 What the Trinity Is

Defined by the Romanian Orthodox theologian, Dumitru Stăniloae, as “the structure of the supreme love,”⁷⁹ the doctrine of the Trinity represents the basis for human salvation. In terms of dogmatic formulations, Stăniloae follows strictly the Creed and the dyophysite formula,⁸⁰ which was adopted during the Council of Chalcedon.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 144.

⁷⁹ Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 282.

⁸⁰ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon Volume Three* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005) 56–74.

The Persons of the Trinity are defined as real, distinguished from each other, with personal characteristics, each retaining the fullness of the divine essence, which is indivisible and undivided, being one and the same from eternity and for eternity. Each Person has special qualities. For instance, the Father is unborn and un-proceeded. The Son is born from the Father from eternity. The Holy Spirit is proceeded from the Father from eternity. The Father gives birth to the Son from being, and for eternity, and the Father also proceeds the Holy Spirit. The Father is unborn and un-proceeded. In terms of external manifestation, the Father is the Creator, the Son is the Savior, and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, and the Comforter who fulfils everything.⁸¹

The dogma of the Trinity is based on divine inter-subjectivity and theological antinomies. The first antinomy is that God's full essence exists in each Person, but it is undivided by the number of persons. The second antinomy is that the three persons are eternal and they coexist from eternity, while at the same time, the Father begets the Son and proceeds the Holy Spirit. The third antinomy is that out of eternity, the Father begets continuously the Son, and proceeds continuously the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the persons of the Trinity can be presented from several aspects such as the divinity of the persons, the distinction between each other and from each other, and the intra-Trinity communication and interpenetration.⁸² In a conventional sense, power is attributed to the Father, truth is attributed to the Son, and grace is attributed to the Holy Spirit; but this does not mean that it is only the Father who has the power, and only the Son is the truth, and only the Holy Spirit has grace, because all these characteristics are common to the divine persons, and are undivided.⁸³

⁸¹ Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 288–300. See also, Todoran and Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 123–125.

⁸² Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 300–306. See also, Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 125–127.

⁸³ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 127–130.

Perichoresis⁸⁴ (from Greek: περιχώρησις, “rotation”) is a term used in reference to the relationship of the three Persons of the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) to one another, as a supreme coexistence and co-habitation with the understanding that one exists within the other two, and the other two exist within one, without embroilment or mixture, reciprocal embracing or reciprocal interpenetration.⁸⁵

1.2.9.2 What the Trinity Is Not

The general context in which Adventism evolved included divisive Protestant views over the definition of the Trinity, in the context of attempts to explain various creedal formulas. Apart from Arianism, and the disagreement over the Filioque clause, the main dogmatic positions contrary to the way Trinity has been defined—hence labelled as “anti-Trinitarian”—that emerged during the first Christian centuries, and which were later reactivated by various Protestant theologians, included Monarchianism, Subordinatianism, Tri-Theism, Unitarianism,⁸⁶ and others.

Monarchianism taught that there is only one God, and there is no distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As for the Persons of the Trinity, these are considered specific ways in which Divinity manifests itself, and these are not to be considered hypostases. Monarchianism was split between Dynamic Monarchianism, which considered the persons of the Trinity as *powers*, and Patripassian Monarchianism (from Latin *patri-* ‘father’ and *passio* ‘suffering’), which considered the Persons as *modes of manifestation*.⁸⁷ Subordinatianism, which the Orthodox considers to be a system of heresies (rather than a heretical group), created a ranking of the persons of the

⁸⁴ Verna Harrison, “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1991): 53–65.

⁸⁵ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 130–132.

⁸⁶ Grayson M. Ditchfield, “Anti-trinitarianism and Toleration in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics: the Unitarian Petition of 1792,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Volume 42, Issue 1 January (1991): 39–67.

⁸⁷ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 133–134.

Trinity in terms of authority. This system included Arianism, Macedonianism, Tri-Theism, Tetra-Theism and Unitarianism. Arianism contended that God the Father is the uncreated principle, and has primacy in comparison with the Son. The Son is the first creature of the Father, and was created *ex nihilo*; not from the essence of the Father. The Son was created for a demiurgic purpose. Macedonianism considered that the Holy Spirit was a creature of the Son, and is therefore subordinated to the Father and to the Son, as their servant. Consequently, Holy Spirit is not true God.⁸⁸ Tri-Theism claimed that there are three gods, and the Persons are of one essence only to the extent three men share human nature together, but they are completely different in will. Tetra-Theism taught that there are four divine persons Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Divine Essence. Unitarianism teaches that there is one God, in one being and one person. As for Jesus Christ, the Unitarian perspective adopted the Arian perspective.⁸⁹

1.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter outlined the dogmatic platform of the “normative” Christology (as it was developed during the Early Church), for the purpose of setting the ground to answer the primary set of questions of this thesis. In doing so, the chapter highlighted the pivotal role of the Scripture during various theological controversies which led to the establishment of the Ecumenical Councils, which defined and universalized the teachings about the identity of Jesus Christ. These Ecumenical Councils succeeded in achieving creedal uniformity; an uniformity arguably maintained in the Orthodox Church as a standard definition for the dogma of Trinity. The Orthodox definition of Trinitarian Christology was introduced to serve as an element of reference and leverage for analyzing the Adventist Christology in the later chapters of the thesis.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 134–138.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 138–140.

Therefore, having a dogmatic frame of reference set, the next chapter will proceed to the exploration of the Christological debates that took place within Seventh-day Adventism in America, prior and after 1888, as a particularization of the debates about who Jesus Christ is.

Chapter 2

Typifying Christology at the Birth Theological Milieu of Adventism

As the ‘divine–human’ Christological puzzle still exists (and perhaps will continue to exist as long as Christianity and humanity itself will exist), the second chapter forges ahead with this puzzle in an audacious attempt to transition from the general to the particular, and from the generic to the specific. If the previous chapter took the risk of offering thick data on the complexities of the debates faced by the early Christians, this second chapter focuses on a specific context: Adventism.

During the transition from the general to the particular, it is important to retain one significant aspect. Unlike with Christ’s contemporaries, the new generations wanted their own opportunity to ‘resolve’ the divine–human puzzle, and in doing so, they had to take full ownership of the ingredients: *the divine* (as in Christ working miracles), and *the human* (as in Christ being physically present). Why should they be deprived of Christ’s physical presence? Why should they force themselves to believe that, to them, Christ could only be available as Eucharistic metaphor? It was the justified cry of those generations comforted by the thought that it is far better to believe something that they have not seen. Deprived of the privilege of Christ’s physical presence—a privilege enjoyed exclusively by the first Christians—the later generations had no choice but hope for His promised return. Furthermore, while the later generations of Orthodox believers had to indulge themselves with the belief that Christ is present only in the Eucharist (as the bread and wine turns into the real blood and body of Christ)¹ some Protestants wanted something more than a metaphor. They justifiably felt entitled to the same privilege as the early Christians had. It was their birthright to touch Christ’s scars;

¹ Biserica Ortodoxă Română, *Învățătură de credință creștină ortodoxă, tipărită cu aprobarea Sfântului Sinod al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2000), 256.

the scars given by a more privileged generation, which in reality was as sinful and ungrateful as their own. It was their birthright to empathize with Thomas. Why not? In fact, by the rule of contrasts, doubt confirms faith. Yet, this desire could have remained forever unfulfilled if it wasn't for Christ's promise of return. As such, the sentiment of entitlement grew even stronger at a time when the idea of equality was shaking the world, and when history had to be made right for everyone.

In a more technical sense, by typifying the theological milieu at the birth of Adventism, this chapter will survey the general preconditions that evolved in the American society, following the Revolutionary War, and the emergence of liberty, brotherhood, and equality, which affected the America's spiritual life. Then, the chapter will survey four factors of influence such as: Anabaptism, Restorationism, Methodism and Deism, which led to the development of Adventist Christology in the context of Christian Connexion's doctrine of Trinity, and Christ's hypostatic union. We will also survey the role played by William Miller, Ellen G. White and others within the excursus of the Christological transition from anti-Trinitarianism to Trinitarianism.

However, before delving into Adventism, it is important to note what was going on within Eastern Christianity during this time. To be sure, Eastern Christianity had already lost its stealth patience with the Ottomans, even though, until then, the Orthodox Church was struggling to suppress its wish for freedom by preaching quietude (*esychía*, silence), and by focusing upon a sense of personal freedom understood only as an inner experience. In fact, this is precisely what Orthodox monasteries promoted through the spiritual movement of the *philokalia*.²

At a theological level there was no such concern with the Person of Christ in the way it was being debated by Adventism. Internally, for Orthodoxy, the debate was

² Marian Gh. Simion, "War and the Right to Life: Orthodox Christian Reflections" pp. 188–206 in Sumner Twiss, Marian Gh. Simion, and Rodney L. Petersen (Eds.) *Religion and Public Policy: Human Rights, Conflict, and Ethics* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 191.

closed with the conclusion of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. However, for the average Orthodox, the return of Christ was understood exclusively in Eucharistic terms, while for the more spiritually advanced, Christ could also return through the hesychastic experience of the Prayer of the Heart; that is by exploring the inner self, with the hope of engaging God's uncreated energies.³

Nevertheless, even though internally the Christological debates were closed for the Orthodox, these were in full swing in various areas of Eastern Europe—such as Transylvania and Ukraine—where the Orthodox Church was being triangulated in a theological conundrum triggered by the competition between Calvinism and Catholicism. More specifically, with the missionary activity of the Jesuits to bring the 'schismatic' Orthodox under Rome's obedience, the old Christological debates over Filioque had been reignited. To understand the intensity and the depth of Filioque upon the Orthodox, one must keep in mind that such debates were no longer limited to a small elite of intellectuals. Filioque intruded the liturgical life of those Orthodox Churches—the infamous Uniates—which accepted to 'return' under Rome. Literally, the intrusion of Filioque affected each Orthodox priest and congregation because it changed the way everyone knew and recited the Creed, which, if combined with social injustice done to the Orthodox, the rejection could only be stronger.⁴

Although the debates became somewhat muted by the pronounced split of the Orthodox Churches between the Uniates and the 'true' Orthodox, during the rise of Adventism, the revolutionary spirit felt in the West had reverberated into the Orthodox world as well. The Orthodox experienced their sense of newfound liberty with the raise

³ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 100.

⁴ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Cluj–Napoca: Editura Dacia, 2002), 131–134.

of nationalism, with cultural messianism in the literature of the Enlightenment and with the anti-Ottoman revolutions.⁵

2.1 The Genesis of Adventism

Inspired by the ideals of Reformation,⁶ the social and political changes encapsulated by the French Revolution motto, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, had affected not only France, but the Western world in general; hatching new promises of freedom, equality, brotherhood, and wellbeing. In this context, religion was by no means immune, as those spiritual leaders who were loyal to the old regime (*l'ancien régime*) had to adapt to the new political environment, while those who embraced the change had to give meaning to the new realities, and interpret the riddle of times with great expectations.⁷

It was in such environment that a US Army officer, William Miller (1782–1849), started preaching the return of Christ.⁸ He first preached as a Baptist minister (the faith of his father), but he was soon labeled fanatic, and excluded from among the Baptists. Studying the *Book of Daniel* and the *Book of Revelation*, William Miller came to the conclusion that Christ was due to return on March 21, 1844,⁹ and mark the beginning of His kingdom on earth.¹⁰ However, because Jesus Christ failed to return on that date, Miller set a second date for October 22, 1844. As the second date went by with no event, Miller became disillusioned with his calculations, and confessed to his followers

⁵ Niketas Siniosoglou, “Three Books on Modern Greek Enlightenment.” *The Historical Journal* 59, no. 1 (2016): 287–92.

⁶ Cf. Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Havens: Yale University Press, 1999), 15–74.

⁷ Cf. Lynn Avery Hunt, *Politics, culture, and class in the French Revolution*, Vol.1 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 1–16.

⁸ Cf. David E. Smith, “Millenarian scholarship in America,” *American Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1965): 535–549.

⁹ Cf. George Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2011), 134–140.

¹⁰ Cf. James H. Moorhead, “Between progress and apocalypse: A reassessment of millennialism in American religious thought, 1800–1880,” *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 3 (1984): 524–542.

what is known as “the Great Disappointment.” “I confess my error and acknowledge my disappointment,” said Miller.¹¹

In 1845 Miller’s followers met in a Mutual Conference of the Adventists, and three of them (a.k.a. “The Millerites”) decided to continue his mission. These were Joseph Bates (1792–1872), James White (1821–81) and his wife Ellen Harmon White (1827–1915); a former Methodist.¹²

Bates and the Whites considered that Miller’s calculations were actually correct, but they referred to some spiritual events, and not to the actual physical arrival of Christ. By re-reading the *Book of Daniel*, chapter 8, the Millerites reached the conclusion that God had already begun “the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary”¹³ back in 1844. However, they chose not to set a new date for Christ’s return, perhaps to avoid another disappointment, and also to expand the spiritual horizon of human transformation in the expectation of Christ’s return. The Millerites were very clear that the imminent advent of Jesus was “personal, visible, audible, bodily, glorious and pre-millennial.”¹⁴

Additionally, they considered that the observance of Saturday as the day of the Sabbath—rather than Sunday—will speed up the Second Coming.¹⁵

The Millerites established a magazine that was initially called *Present Truth*, and then *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (now called, *Review and Herald*.) In 1855 they established their headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan,¹⁶ and then, in 1903, their

¹¹ Melton J. Gordon, “Spiritualization and reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails.” *American Studies* 26, no. 2 (1985): 17–29.

¹² J. H. Sm, “Adventists,” entry in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition Vol. 1 publ. William Benton (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1977), 101–103.

¹³ P. Gerard Damsteegt, “The Sanctuary and Adventist Experience,” *Ministry* 67, no. 10 (1994). Accessed on April 24, 2017, <https://www.andrews.edu/~damsteeg/sanc.html>

¹⁴ J. H. Sm, “Adventists,” Ibid.

¹⁵ Cf. Laura M. Hartman, “Christian Sabbath-keeping as a spiritual and environmental practice.” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 15, no. 1 (2011): 47–64.

¹⁶ Mary G. Butler & Elizabeth Neumeyer, *A Brief History of Battle Creek*, accessed on April 26, 2017, http://www.heritagebattlecreek.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58&Itemid=61

headquarters were moved in Takoma Park, in Washington, DC.¹⁷ In 1863 they became an official denomination called The Seventh-day Adventists.¹⁸

Apart from the Millerites, new churches and movements developed as a direct and indirect result of William Miller's prophecy, such as, the Evangelical Adventists (1845), Life and Advent Union (1862), Church of God (Seventh-day, 1866), Church of God General Conference (Abrahamic Faith, 1888) and the Advent Christian Church.¹⁹

2.2 The Theological Milieu at the Birth of Adventism

The American Revolutionary War ended in 1783; however the revolutionary spirit not only surpassed the historical event, but continued to ferment all aspects of American society. And, just as mentioned above, religion was not exempt. On the contrary it served as a subconscious mechanism for a meaningful social transformation. In a more concrete sense, freedom from England meant also freedom from English identity—including the language itself—as the revolutionaries fell just one vote short of rejecting English as the national language, by trying to adopt German.²⁰

Elias Smith, one of the founders of the *Christian Connexion*, believed that all forms of organized churches were to be repudiated because they were *all* inherently 'British'.²¹ The declared objectives of the Revolutionary War included national and social emancipation from under the British 'yoke', and its shock waves stirred deeply within the human soul and into the most intimate human holy of holies; that is the relationship with God. Man was now called to control his own destiny. Therefore, his

¹⁷ Jason Horn, "Seventh-day Adventist Archives." *The American Archivist* 17, no. 3 (1954): 221–224.

¹⁸ J. H. Sm, "Adventists," Ibid. See also, Land, Gary, entry in *Historical dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

¹⁹ J. H. Sm, "Adventists," Ibid.

²⁰ Cf. Dennis Baron, "The legendary English-only vote of 1795," *Retrieved Dec 16 (2008)*: 2008.

²¹ Cf. Paul K. Conkin, *American Originals: homemade varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 110–159.

own reason and experience must become, in the spirit of the French Revolution, his highest and ultimate authority.²²

For the unsophisticated Puritan mentality, entrenched into the philosophy of an uncontested divine sovereignty, apparently ‘irrational’ doctrines such as ‘Trinity’, or ‘two natures’ of Jesus Christ, were to be regarded as vestiges of the past; therefore obsolete to the new mind.²³ At the same time, Unitarianism was rapidly emerging among the more educated class. The Calvinistic principle of election started colliding with the new philosophy of *égalité* and *fraternité*, and “the odor of Calvinist propaganda” was eventually replaced on the public sphere.²⁴ ‘Predestination’ was contrasted with ‘salvation for all mankind,’ thus giving birth to Universalism among the less educated.²⁵

The resistance of the established churches to the new theological movements led further to the phenomenon of ‘separation’ across religious lines (as driven by politics), and to libels, such as, ‘separatists’ and ‘loyalists’. The notion of conversion shifted its focus from the Calvinistic “action of God” to Arminianism, which focussed on “man’s response” to God’s action.²⁶ Out of this conundrum, the *Freewill Baptists*²⁷ and the *Christian Connexion* emerged as new Christian movements.²⁸ Of these two, the Christian Connexion is particularly important—at least for our argument—since this particular movement was the initial home of two of the founders of Adventism: Joseph

²² Cf. Jonathan Israel, *A revolution of the mind: Radical enlightenment and the intellectual origins of modern democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1–35.

²³ Donald J. d’Elia, “Benjamin Rush: Philosopher of the American Revolution.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 64, no. 5 (1974): 1–113.

²⁴ Cf. Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 27–58.

²⁵ Adolf G. Koch, *Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 3–27.

²⁶ Heimert, 59–94.

²⁷ Cf. Ruth B. Bordin, “The Sect to Denomination Process in America: The Freewill Baptist Experience,” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 34, no. 01 (1965): 77–94.

²⁸ Cf. Leroy Garrett, *The Stone–Campbell Movement: The Story of the American Restoration Movement*, Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002. (See particularly the following chapters “The Movement with Three Faces: Churches of Christ,” “The Movement with Three Faces: Christian Churches,” “The Movement with Three Faces: Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ),” “The Three Churches of the Movement: Their Relation to Each Other,” and “The Movement Faces the Twenty-First Century.”)

Bates and James White.²⁹ Therefore, understanding the background of the founders of Adventism in the Restorationist movement and the Christian Connexion is crucial for understanding the later doctrinal and ecclesiastical development of Adventism.³⁰

2.3 Four Factors of Influence

One of the most distinguished Adventist church historians (also a professor at Andrews University), George R. Knight, in one of the chapters of his book, *A Search for Identity*, states that “Adventism wasn’t born in a vacuum.”³¹ In defending his statement, Knight identifies four main factors that strongly influenced the initial stages of Adventism. These are *Anabaptism* (through Radical Reformation mentality), *Restorationism* (through Joseph Bates and James White), *Methodism* (through Ellen G. Harmon White), and *Deism* (through William Miller.)³²

2.3.1 Anabaptism

George R. Knight describes the roots of Adventism as being theologically informed not so much by the North American Protestantism (an heir of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation), but more so by the Radical Reformation of the Anabaptists. Although not prominent in America as an organization, the Anabaptists have strongly inspired the theological current known as Restorationism.³³ The core theology of the Anabaptists was the recovery of fidelity to the New Testament teaching. They felt this was necessary because the main Protestant denominations, while confessing the *sola*

²⁹ Cf. George R. Knight, *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism*. Hagerstown MD: Review and Herald Pub Assoc, 2004. (The entire volume is relevant in giving an overview that clarifies the point expressed in the text.)

³⁰ Stefan Höschel, “The Remnant Concept in Early Adventism: From Apocalyptic Antisectarianism to an Eschatological Denominational Ecclesiology,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)* 51, no. 2 (2013): 4.

³¹ George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub Assoc, 2000), 29.

³² Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 34.

³³ As defined by church historian George R. Knight, restorationism is a movement aimed at reforming the churches by restoring all of the New Testament teachings. Cf. Knight, *Ibid.*, 31.

scriptura concept, were highly inconsistent in their confession and interpretation.³⁴ The Anabaptists considered that the two practices of *infant baptism*,³⁵ and of the *state support* for the Church,³⁶ were unbiblical. Therefore, they were determined to fight and replace these old practices with the new practice of adult baptism, and with a total separation between Church and State. In doing so, the Anabaptists viewed these reforms not so much as traditions or creedal statements, but more so as steps toward a full restoration of the believer's Church in line with the spirit of the New Testament. Martin Luther,³⁷ Ulrich Zwingli,³⁸ and John Calvin³⁹—the most prominent reformers—were not to be rejected; however their Reformation, as great as it was, must be continued until *all* truth was restored to its original form.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the Anabaptists considered themselves not only the products of Reformation, but also missionaries, called to continue and bring it to full completion.

2.3.2 Restorationism

Restorationism rejected the view that the Reformation was an event that occurred only in the sixteenth century. For them, the Reformation began in the sixteenth century, but would not be completed until the last vestiges of tradition were gone, and the teachings of the Bible (especially the New Testament) were firmly in place, in the Church. In theory, this ran parallel and perhaps synchronous with the slogan, “Ecclesia Reformata

³⁴ Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*. Moscow: Canon Press, 2001. (The entire volume is relevant in giving an overview that clarifies the point expressed in the text.)

³⁵ Rollin S. Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism: A Representative Study: A Representative Study*. No. 11. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998. (The entire volume is relevant in giving an overview that clarifies the point expressed in the text.)

³⁶ Franklin H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*. Vol. 11. Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 2000. (The entire volume is relevant in giving an overview that clarifies the point expressed in the text.)

³⁷ John S. Oyer, “Luther and the Anabaptists,” *Lutheran Reformers Against Anabaptists* Springer: Netherlands (1964): 114–139.

³⁸ Glen J. Clary, “Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Anabaptists: sola scriptura and the reformation of Christian worship.” *Confessional Presbyterian* 6 (2010): 108–124.

³⁹ Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999. (The entire volume is relevant in giving an overview that clarifies the point expressed in the text.)

⁴⁰ Cf. E. Belfort Bax, *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*. Vol. 3. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001. (See particularly, chapter 6, “The Reign of the Saints,” last accessed, April 29, 2017 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1903/anabaptists/ch06.htm>)

Semper Reformanda;” that is “the Reformed Church Reforms Continuously.”⁴¹ In fact, the task of the Restorationist movement was to complete the unfinished work of Reformation.⁴² The spirit of the Restorationist movement had influenced the main Protestant denominations of early America, and led to the establishment of new churches such as, the Church of Christ, the Disciples of Christ, the Christian Connexion, and the Christian Church.⁴³

2.3.3 Methodism

Apart from Anabaptism, Methodism can be considered yet another source of inspiration for Adventism, and thus significant for our argument. Methodism was the tradition that Ellen Gould Harmon⁴⁴ came from, and she is considered a “third” founder of Adventism. Ellen Gould Harmon is known by her marital name, Ellen White, as she married James White, and took his family name.⁴⁵

2.3.4 Deism

Deism represents a fourth most influential part of the American theological landscape which influenced Adventism, because it promoted the primacy of human reason over the scripture. By regarding human reason (rather than the Bible) as essentially the ultimate authority,⁴⁶ Miller proclaimed the second coming of Christ based on prophetic calculations derived from a deistic pattern of thinking. Furthermore, he also found a large audience in America *because* America seemed to appreciate anything that followed a logical sequence, and was based on rationalism and a rational choice

⁴¹ Jerald D. Gort, “Contours of the Reformed Understanding of Christian Mission: An Attempt at Delineation.” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 4, no. 4 (1980): 156–160.

⁴² Knight, *Search for Identity*, 31.

⁴³ Charles F. Brazell, Jr. *Reluctant Restorationist: Thomas Campbell's Trial and Its Role in His Legacy*, PhD Dissertation (Arlington: University of Texas at Arlington, 2007), 1–80.

⁴⁴ Cf. Jonathan M. Butler, “Prophecy, Gender, and Culture: Ellen Gould Harmon [White] and the Roots of Seventh-Day Adventism,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (1991): 3–29.

⁴⁵ Roy E. Graham, *Ellen G. White: Co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Vol. 12 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Incorporated, 1985) 37, n49.

⁴⁶ Cf. Jeff Crocombe, “A Feast of Reason:” *The Roots of William Miller's Biblical Interpretation and Its Influence On The Seventh-day Adventist Church* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland, 2011), 12 –50.

approach.⁴⁷ Deism rejected Christianity, its miracles, and the supernatural origins of the Bible. Nevertheless, Adventism retained the rational approach from deism, but adopted the Bible as the ultimate authority.⁴⁸

As a conclusion to the four factors of influence, and in line with church historian George Knight, the Adventist founders did not emerge ‘from a vacuum’ but from other denominations with established traditions and doctrines. In shaping the new faith, the founders brought with them their own theological assumption and practicality which they applied to the emerging Adventism. Therefore, some of their own theological biases and practical assumption constituted the very foundation of the Adventist identity.

2.4 The Development of Adventist Christology

In light of our theme, we will focus primarily on the development of Adventist Christology; particularly on the convulsiveness of Trinitarianism. Specifically, our research is concerned primarily with the thinking of the Adventist theologians whose work focused on answering the question of Jesus Christ’s divinity. Therefore, it is important to know the specific theological background of the founders, and to what degree this background influenced the doctrinal establishment of Adventism.

One such source of analysis is the so called “Christian Connexion”—an association of Restorationist churches which refused to establish themselves as a new denomination. As a theological trend, this association was anti-creedal (“no creed but the Bible”), anti-traditional, and anti-Trinitarian. The theological background of the Christian Connexion is of particular importance, since Joseph Bates and James White,

⁴⁷ Cf. E. Brooks Hilfield, *Theology in America: Christian thought from the age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Havens, CT: Yale University Press, 2005) 56–78.

⁴⁸ Cf. Kerry S. Walters, *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992. (This work is relevant here in its entirety.)

two of the founders of Adventism, were deeply influenced by this association in their theological presumptions, as they imported Connexionist, and anti-Trinitarian concepts into Adventism.

2.4.1 The Christian Connexion

The Christian Connexion was formed in 1810 by an association of three main groups of Christians under the leadership of Elias Smith, Abner Jones, and James O'Kelly, with a total membership of approximately 20,000.⁴⁹ It was a Restorationist type of a “made in America” movement that reflected the social and political atmosphere of the nineteenth century America.⁵⁰ Based on a detailed analysis, Thomas Olbricht describes Jones and Smith as follows:

“Jones had been impressed with the need to depend only on the Bible, and he had discovered in reading Acts that the early disciples went by the name Christian. He was ordained by a conference of Freewill preachers, but as a ‘Christian’. . . . His reason for being ordained in this way was his preference for the name but also his desire not to be limited in his preaching by a denominational label. As the result he was able to preach among the Baptists, Freewill Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. Smith first attended a Freewill conference in 1795 at Somersworth, N. H., and expressed his approval of what went on. . . . Though he had met Freewill preachers earlier, he had viewed them with the usual Baptist prejudices. In 1803 he [Smith] was convinced by Jones that the disciples of the Lord should wear [only] the name Christian, and this [conviction] stood in the way of full fellowship. A second matter which kept the two apart was the organization of the Freewills. The structure of that group was too formal for the independent outlook of Jones and Smith at that time.”⁵¹

In a short period, the Arminian-leaning Christian Connexion expanded into New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and New York. The Arminian thrust correlated not only with various Christian movements, but also seemed to follow the political process of the time.⁵²

⁴⁹ Adin Ballou, *Practical Christianity: An Epitome of Practical Christian Socialism* (Providence: BlackStone Editions, 2002), 130–143.

⁵⁰ Milton V. Backman, “The Quest for a Restoration: The Birth of Mormonism in Ohio,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 12, no. 4 (1972): 346–364.

⁵¹ Thomas H. Olbricht, “Christian Connexion and Unitarian Relations 1800–1844,” *Restoration Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1966): 160–186; accessed July 15, 2016, http://www.acu.edu/legacy/sponsored/restoration_quarterly/archives/1960s/vol_9_no_3_contents/olbricht.html.

⁵² George H. Williams, *First Light: The Formation of Harvard College in 1636 and Evolution of a Republic of Letters in Cambridge*, ed. Rodney L. Petersen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 92–93.

A significant work in this respect is David Ludlum's *Social Ferment in Vermont 1791–1850*. As Olbricht observes,

“Ludlum explores the Vermont social climate and concludes that these Arminian leanings were the result of the new democratic experience and the optimistic outlook of the American frontiersman.⁵³ The Arminian tendencies were thus a facet of the total religious milieu and not limited to an individual movement.”⁵⁴

Christian Connexion was a composite movement comprised of diverse groups of Christians, ‘connected’ mainly by the universal offer of salvation, and by the Arminian view of the human will. They stopped short of being Unitarians, but never stopped admiring them and their doctrine, which later led them to the adoption of Unitarian views regarding the *Trinity* and the *two natures* of Christ. These two controversial theological positions, adopted by the Connexion, became inherited by the Seventh-day Adventist Church along her journey.⁵⁵

2.4.2 The Trinitarian Dilemma

As of September 1808, under the care of Elias Smith, references to the Trinity began to appear in the Connexion's bimonthly *Herald of Gospel Liberty*;⁵⁶ however in a non-controversial manner. It was only toward the end of this publication (1816) that the first signs of anti-Trinitarianism appeared.

A series of articles about Calvin's burning of Michael Servetus⁵⁷ raised the tension between Trinitarians and anti-Trinitarians to a higher level. Although the Trinity was not mentioned in this series of articles, the cause of Servetus's martyrdom was

⁵³ David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont 1791–1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 32; as cited by Olbricht, *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ Olbricht, *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ Woodrow Wilson Whidden, Jerry Moon, John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationship* (Hagerston, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 187–188.

⁵⁶ *Herald of Gospel Liberty* is considered by some historians to be the first religious journal published in the United States. See, Daniel Hazard, *200 years and counting: the legacy of the Herald of Gospel Liberty lives on*, (Cleveland, OH: United Church of Christ, 2008), last accessed, April 2, 2018, <http://www.ucc.org/200-years-and-counting-the>

⁵⁷ Roland Herbert Bainton, *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511–1553*. No.2 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 13–24.

clear. The Trinity was becoming increasingly associated with Calvin's cruelty toward the hero of the Unitarians across America.

By the year 1811, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, written primarily by Elias Smith, was well marked with numerous articles on Trinity, which was not as much of biblical investigation as it was a common sense—rational if you wish—description. “[N]o one with good sense could explain how three persons could be one,” stated Smith.⁵⁸

2.4.3 The Two Natures of Christ

Regarding the two natures of Christ, Elias Smith was categorical in rejecting the Methodist doctrine.

“I do not believe in an impersonal God, nor consider the son and Spirit as properties of God; but consider the son and Spirit as the Scripture has described them,” wrote Smith.⁵⁹

Elias Smith stated openly that the Trinity is “a fable” because one cannot find this word in the Scripture.

2.4.4 The Incremental Adoption of anti-Trinitarianism

In 1817, Elias Smith left the Connexion and joined the Universalists, and Abner Jones left preaching and dedicated himself to medical studies. By that time, a new generation of theologians was emerging, holding the reigns of the anti-Trinitarian Christian Connexion. Smith's articles added momentum to anti-Trinitarianism, and precipitated the publication of a booklet titled, *On Contradictions in the Methodist Discipline on the Trinity*,⁶⁰ by a preacher named Frederic Plumer.

However, the most significant contribution to the non-Trinitarian Christology of the Connexion was the work titled, *The True Messiah in Scripture Light; or the Unity of God, and Proper Sonship of Jesus Christ, Affirmed and Defended*, authored by David

⁵⁸ *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, July 5 (1811): 297.

⁵⁹ *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, September 15 (1809): 110; as quoted by Olbricht, Ibid.

⁶⁰ Olbricht, Ibid.

Millard;⁶¹ the Connexion's first ordained preacher in the state of New York. This book along with Plumer's booklet set the stage for the Unitarian Christology in the Connection, as Millard himself acknowledged.

Another prominent minister of the time, Joshua Himes (who would later join the Millerite Movement) noted that anyone seeing a Christian Connexion group thought that they were Unitarians.

Anti-Trinitarianism and the Christology of the Christian Connexion received the encouragement and the approval of the Unitarians, and raised their hope for unifying the two religious bodies.⁶² The only serious disagreement was in the area of pastoral education. As described by Rev. Henry W. Bellows, the members of the Christian Connexion,

“are a sort of Unitarian Methodist, having the theology of the elder Unitarians without their culture, and the heat and fervor, the camp-meeting usages, and emotional feelings of the Methodists, without their ecclesiastical system of opinions. They have specially cultivated devotional feeling, and commonly owe their accessions to sudden conversions during periodical excitements which are conscientiously favored by them. . . . It claims more than a thousand churches, and boasts fifteen hundred ministers, who have commonly been men wholly uneducated for the ministry, except by their convictions, scriptural reading, and prayers.”⁶³

Concerning ‘their system of opinions,’ their affirmed position was the *sola scriptura* (Bible only) doctrine, and no form of organization.

“It was boasted by many preachers in New England and New York that the Bible was their only creed, and that by it alone they would be governed; but unless the production of great excitement, camp meetings, war against Trinitarians, and enunciations against Calvinism be walking by the Bible alone, I cannot see that these Eastern Christians are more under the banners of the Bible than any other sect in the land.”⁶⁴

Nevertheless, an unexpected development brought the Connexionist–Unitarian relationship and hope of unity to a halt.

⁶¹ David Millard, *The True Messiah, in Scripture Light; Or the Unity of God, and Proper Sonship of Jesus Christ, Affirmed and Defended*. Memphis, TN: General Books LLC, 2012. (This work is to be read in its entirety as an overview of this argument.)

⁶² Bernard Kozirog, “The Doctrinal Peculiarity of 19th Century Adventism: Teaching About The Trinity,” *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Review* (2013): 32–49.

⁶³ Henry W. Bellows, *The Claims of Antioch College* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1865), 3.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. VII (1836): 545.

“This was the Millerite excitement concerning the second coming. People joined Miller from all denominations, but especially from the Baptists, Free Baptists, and the Christian churches. The movement seemed to appeal especially to the Biblically oriented, experiential, rural, and lower socio-economic churchman. The Christians contributed considerable leadership to the movement, especially in the areas of publication and pamphleteering.”⁶⁵

Therefore, each parted its own way, in line with the American spirit of freedom of belief and independence.

2.5 Christ’s Return: Parousia, Millennialism, and Millerism

It is impossible to understand William Miller, and the movement that came to bear his name, without considering the theme of Christ’s return, as it surfaced within the Chiliasm and the Millenarian Movements.

In general, the concept millennialism describes the outcome of the theological combination of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and millennium mentioned in the Apocalypse (Revelation 20:1–17).

2.5.1 Christ’s Return and Chiliasm

2.1.1.1 Parousia

Christ’s Second Coming, or Parousia (Gr. παρουσία, ‘presence’ or ‘arrival’), had been an event divinely promised in the *Book of Acts* (in the context of Christ’s ascent to heaven),⁶⁶ and as such it was longed for by almost each generation during times of despair. This magnificent return was also paired by the promise of the establishment of the Kingdom of one thousand years (*Chiliasm*)—a promise revealed in John’s

⁶⁵ Olbricht, Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Then they gathered around him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:6–11)

Apocalypse.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, as Christ's return failed to materialize, the promises of the Apocalypse became subject to further scrutiny (particularly around A.D. 150), when the Apocalypse became subject of tense debates in terms of how this should be read; or even if this should be part of the biblical canon at all. As Jerome famously wrote, "the Apocalypse of John has as many mysteries as it does words" (*Apocalypsis Johannis tot habet sacramenta quot verba*),⁶⁸ and so it did for the rest of the Christian history.

Due to political sensibilities—as the early Christians were subject to severe persecution—a kingdom was a concept politically charged, as it theoretically targeted the political structures of the Roman Empire. Therefore, the *Apocalypse* had been carefully put aside, and never used during rituals as a devotional text.

Nevertheless, the hope for Christ's return, along with the apocalyptic creativity of the second century, led to the acceptance of John's *Apocalypse* as a canonical writing.⁶⁹ Influential personalities such as Irenaeus of Lyons,⁷⁰ Hippolytus,⁷¹ and Justin the

⁶⁷ "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time." (Rev. 20:1–3)

⁶⁸ Jerome, *Epistula* 53.8, *PL* 22:548–49.

⁶⁹ Bernard McGinn, "Turning Points in Early Christian Apocalypse Exegesis," in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 82–84.

⁷⁰ Writing in reference to the prophecies about the blessings of Isaac (Gen. 27:27ff), which foretold Christ's kingdom, Irenaeus stated that, "[i]f any one, then, does not accept these things as referring to the appointed kingdom, he must fall into much contradiction and contrariety, as is the case with the Jews, who are involved in absolute perplexity." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, in *ANF Vol.1* eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 562.

⁷¹ Hippolytus was definite in teaching that the divine revelation was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and, as Bernard McGinn explains, "accepted and helped develop the full-fledged apocalyptic scenario of the events of the end time partly under the influence of Irenaeus, but who did not share the bishop's chiliasm and broke with tradition by explicitly rejecting an imminent parousia." See, McGinn, "Turning Points," 85. As Hippolytus writes, "through the Scriptures we are instructed in two advents of the Christ and Saviour. And the first after the flesh was in humiliation, because He was manifested in lowly estate. So then His second advent is declared to be in glory; for He comes from heaven with power, and angels, and the glory of His Father. His first advent had John the Baptist as its forerunner; and His second, in which He is to come in glory, will exhibit Enoch, and Elias, and John the Divine." See, Hippolytus, *A Discourse*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, in *ANF Vol.5* eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 247.

Martyr⁷² held favorable views, but they were contested by Origen and Augustine⁷³ in their attempts to repudiate the sect of the Montanists.

It is my interpretation that the timing of Christ's return encountered strong ambivalence simply because—based on the scripture—it was considered a symbol of temptation against God's intimate knowledge and revelation. When Jesus was asked by His disciples when He was to return to establish His Kingdom, Jesus rebuked their curiosity by saying: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7) Beyond the scripture, my interpretation is also anchored in history, because, during the early Church, any Christian suspected of attempting to calculate Christ's return, by appealing to mathematics, astronomy, and astrology, was suspected of being a heretic.⁷⁴

Nevertheless such curiosity prevailed, as by the 4th century, a new religious group called "Priscillianists"⁷⁵ evolved. Chiliasm survived particularly through the Montanists⁷⁶ (who also emphasized the superiority of ecstatic prophecy⁷⁷ over against bishop's authority), and expected the end of the age;⁷⁸ a belief that survived until the

⁷² Justin Martyr's view of the Millennial Kingdom was deeply charged with imagery. In his *Dialogus cum Tryphone* ("Dialogue with Trypho") chapters 75 to 82, Justin persuades his Jewish friend to follow Christ, because, by all prophetic accounts (particularly those from Isaiah), Jesus Christ was the expected Messiah, and all prophetic gifts of the Jews had been transferred to the Christians. Justin strongly supported the theory of a Double Resurrection and the theory of the Millennial Kingdom to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. See, McGinn, "Turning Points," 86. As he wrote, "A certain man among us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, prophesized in a revelation made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem." See, Miroslav Marcovich, ed. *Iustini Martyris: Dialogus cum Tryphone* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 210–212. As quoted by McGinn, "Turning Points," 86–7.

⁷³ Bowker, *The Oxford Dictionary*, 642.

⁷⁴ For instance, Canon 36 of Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363–364), stated that, "Priests and clerics must not be magicians, or enchanterers, or mathematicians, or astrologers, or makers of so-called amulets, which are snares of their own souls. And those who wear them we order to be expelled from the Church." See, Lewis J. Patsavos, *A Noble Task: Entry into the Clergy in the First Five Centuries*, trans. Norman Russell, forward by Kallistos Ware (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 222.

⁷⁵ E. R. Hardy, review of *Priscillian of Avila, The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church*, by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976. xiv+ 250 pp.), in *Church History* 46, no. 01 (1977): 105–106.

⁷⁶ Frederick Charles Klawiter, *The New Prophecy in Early Christianity: The Origin, Nature, and Development of Montanism, AD 165–220: a Dissertation*, PhD diss., Chicago: University of Chicago Divinity School, 1975. See also, John C. Poirier, "Montanist Pepuza-Jerusalem and the Dwelling Place of Wisdom," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no. 4 (1999): 491–507.

⁷⁷ A. Dauntton-Fear, "The ecstasies of Montanus," *Studia Patristica* 17.2 (1982): 648–651.

⁷⁸ McGinn, "Turning Points," 88.

ninth century. A strong comeback of Chiliasm was made by the Medieval Cathari (Purifiers),⁷⁹ who visibly promoted such views.

The Reformation generated new trends of Chiliasm, such as those led by the Anabaptists⁸⁰ (c.1534), by the Fifth Monarchy Men⁸¹ (c.1640), and by the German Pietistic Lutherans⁸² (17th and 18th centuries); all keen in calculating the return of Christ based on various biblical data, which set the creation of the world in year B.C. 4004.⁸³

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Chiliasm took new contours, as triggered by social and political events such as the American and the French revolutions.

2.1.1.2 Millenarian Movements

American Protestantism had been subjected to various millenarian movements. These movements were groups of Christians who expected the arrival of a period of unparalleled peace on earth, usually associated with the return of Christ. Some of these groups—known as postmillennial—promoted the belief that the present age will be reconstructed incrementally into ‘the millennium’, in an ordinary way, through social reform triggered by religious revival. Other groups—known as premillennial—simply believed that the expected golden age of unparalleled peace will only settle in once the present age will be destroyed through divine fury, which involved Christ’s Second Coming.⁸⁴

As far as the postmillennial groups are concerned, it has been long argued that American Protestantism had been suspected of millenarian hopes simply because, for example, the Puritans saw themselves being sent by God on an “errand into the

⁷⁹ R. R. Moore, “The Birth of Popular Heresy: A Millennial Phenomenon?,” *Journal of Religious History* 24, no. 1 (2000): 8–25.

⁸⁰ Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500–2000* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 20–36.

⁸¹ Leo F. Solt, “The Fifth Monarchy Men: Politics and the Millennium,” *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 30, no. 03 (1961): 314–324.

⁸² Cf. Douglas Shantz, *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660–1800*, Leiden: Brill, 2014.

⁸³ Cf. William R. Brice, “Bishop Ussher, John Lightfoot and the age of creation,” *Journal of Geological Education* 30, no. 1 (1982): 18–24.

⁸⁴ Timothy P. Webber “Millenarian Movements” in Daniel G. Reid, coord. ed. *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 738.

wilderness” to establish the ideal Christian church and commonwealth. And, as Jonathan Edwards experienced the Great Awakening, Edwards believed that the millennium was immanent and will begin in America. Furthermore, during early nineteenth century, the majority of evangelical missionaries adopted some postmillennial views which they used in their mission in America and abroad, and during the 1830s, revivalists such as Charles G. Finney, predicted that the millennium will arrive within few years. Nevertheless, the arrival of the Civil War, which brought towering religious, economic and social crises, had deflated such expectations for the arrival of the millennium.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, American postmillennialism generally remained a scattered movement, as its adherents did not establish separate churches or denominations because they came from various denominations and groups which were attempting to revamp their internal efforts for revival, mission and reform. At the same time, some groups succeeded in establishing themselves as precursors of the coming millennium. Such groups included the Shakers, who believed that the Second Advent of Christ already occurred in the person of Mother Ann Lee; or the Oneida Community, founded by John Humphrey Noyes in 1840, who believed that Christ’s Second Coming took place in year A.D.70.; or the Mormons, who believed that God had restored the gospel to them, and Christ’s return will be preceded by tribulations and intense persecution of the saints. Other millenarian groups became famous due to their failed prophecies, such as those of the Baptist minister, William Miller, the founder of Adventism.⁸⁶

2.5.2 Miller and Millerism

The post-millennial coming of Christ was the established theology in within America’s frontiers, with more than one theory concerning this establishment. Therefore, in the

⁸⁵ Webber, Ibid.

⁸⁶ Webber, Ibid., 738–739.

words of George Knight, America was *infected* with millennial fever, and at other times *drunk* with the same.⁸⁷

William Miller experienced a series of dramatic changes that strongly impacted his theology. Born in a Christian home with a devout Baptist mother, he was raised Baptist. His theological formation swung from deep Christian conviction, to Deism, then, after the War of 1812, back to Christianity as he became a devoted student of the Bible. He read with undivided attention every word and every verse of the Bible, trying his best to understand the meaning and the message of each passage. Of special interest to him were the prophetic affirmations of the Bible. He studied them for years and confirmed them with history and mathematics. His burning desire was the study of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14,⁸⁸ which led him to “the solemn conclusion . . . that in about twenty-five years from that time [reaching to the year 1843] all the affairs of our present state would be ‘wound up’ and Christ would come.”⁸⁹ This pre-millennial conclusion was in obvious contrast to the post-millennialism of the day. Miller states: “I therefore feared to present it, lest by some possibility I should be in error, and be the means of misleading any.”⁹⁰

He dedicated five more years to the study of Scripture from all angles and perspectives imaginable to him. The result was the same—Christ would come in 1843. Another nine years passed when, after a striking answer to prayer, he finally spoke for the first time about his pre-millennial Second Coming convictions in the house of his brother-in-law, Hiram S. Guilford, on the second Sunday of August 1831. Invitations

⁸⁷ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 36.

⁸⁸ According to the Book of Daniel, “He said to me, ‘It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be re-consecrated.’” (Daniel 8:14)

⁸⁹ Paul Della Valle, *Massachusetts Troublemakers: Rebels, Reformers, and Radicals from the Bay State*. (Guilford, CT: GPP, 2009), 76. See also George Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 3rd Edition (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2012), 14.

⁹⁰ William Miller, *Apology and Defence*, as quoted by Knight, *Brief History*, 15.

began to pour in, and converts followed as well. Among these new converts was the prominent pastor and publicist Joshua Himes.

Once Joshua Himes joined, the Millerite Adventism was never to be the same.⁹¹ Himes started two publications—*Signs of the Times*, with a very wide circulation, and *Midnight Cry* (limited to the New York area)—as media conveyors of Miller’s message. Himes claimed that “the message” was sent “to all missionary stations that we know of on the globe,”⁹² and to over 500,000⁹³ people in the USA, by all the major lines of communication.

What was the motivation behind Miller’s unprecedented evangelistic thrust and engagement with the world? One might answer that it was his passionate desire to be “cleansed from the blood of the souls,” and his conscience freed “from all guilt in their condemnation,” as Ellen White would put it.⁹⁴

Miller viewed the multitudes before him and saw them ‘perishing by the thousands’ and ‘sleeping over the volcano of God’s wrath’.⁹⁵ No other reason or hidden agenda marred his soul. Love for God and his fellow men was the supreme motivation of Miller, in a sacrificial and life-giving consummation, according to the light he had and for the salvation of as many as possible, as expressed in his *Memoirs of William Miller*.⁹⁶ He was under full conviction that he had the truth and it was his duty to warn all people about the impending doom. His message—*Save your soul!*—was accompanied with deep pain and worry, as if the entire burden of the world was laid on his shoulders.

⁹¹ Silvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*; as quoted by Knight, *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹² Joshua V. Himes, *Signs of the Times* August 3 (1842), 1.

⁹³ Knight, *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Conflict of the Ages Story*, Vol. 5. *The Great Controversy* (Tellico Plains, TN: Vernon C. Sparks, 2012), 407.

⁹⁵ William Miller, “Letter—Miller to his son” Nov. 17, 1838; *Signs of the Times*, Apr. 15 (1840): 14.

⁹⁶ Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, as quoted in Knight, *Ibid.*, 18.

Miller, the inner man, was in a continual struggle for truth. He had devoted numerous years of study, decoding the Scripture, so as to understand its hidden message. Arriving at a certain conclusion, he would debate it from all possible angles as much as his knowledge allowed it, and then cautiously begin sharing it.

To those from Miller's inner circle, who were exposed to his understanding of the Scriptures, Miller was "not impressive"—at least physically—"about five feet seven inches in height, very thick set, broad shoulders, lightish brown hair, a little bald, a benevolent countenance, full of wrinkles, and his head shakes as though he was slightly afflicted with palsy."⁹⁷ As for his moral profile, the impression was equally lacklustre, as friends and foes alike stated, "we doubt not that he is sincere," and "that he is a Christian at heart."⁹⁸ Furthermore, as the *Lynn Record* added, "no one can hear him five minutes without being convinced of his sincerity."⁹⁹

Miller's honesty was most strikingly manifested in the hour of his agony and disappointment over Christ's return, when his calculations, his predictions, and all his efforts to warn the world failed. Acknowledging his failure, Miller identified his errors to be either in his time calculation, or perhaps in his interpretation of Scripture. However, by no means did he surrender his hope of awaiting his Saviour's return. Standing upright and facing his beloved believers and co-workers, he admonished them,

"Brethren, hold fast; let no man take your crown. I have fixed my mind on another time, and here I mean to stand until God gives me more light, and that is, *today, today, and today*, until he comes."¹⁰⁰

Although his educational record was not very impressive—a *plain farmer*—his listeners were convinced that Miller "read and studied prophecy very closely,"¹⁰¹ and "his knowledge of Scripture is extensive and minute; that of the prophecies surprisingly

⁹⁷ *Maine Wesleyan Journal*, quoted in Himes, *View of Prophecies*, 15.

⁹⁸ *Sandy Hill Herald*, as Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 181–2.

⁹⁹ Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People*, 75.

¹⁰⁰ Bliss, 278.

¹⁰¹ *Maine Wesleyan Journal*, as quoted in Himes, 15.

familiar.”¹⁰² As for the task of “heralding the Second Coming of Christ,” the fact that “he is quite an old man in his speech” was not necessarily a flattering advantage. Although the topic of Biblical prophecy was in itself incendiary, “his lectures are of the most deliberate and dispassionate kind.” There was no particular excitement in his presentation. If there was any excitement that was “out-of-doors among such as did not attend Br[other] M’s [Miller’s] lectures,” reported pastor Fleming. However, Miller’s preaching style placed an “almost universal solemnity on the minds of all people.”¹⁰³ The editor of *The Fountain*, who attended Miller’s lectures, wrote that “almost breathless silence [. . .] reigned throughout the immense throng for two or three hours at a time.”¹⁰⁴ “The message” was well received everywhere and the opposition had little to say in light of Miller’s demonstrations. He was surprised to see these results and attributed to his tremendous success to God’s work.

“It astonishes me, and I can only account for it by supposing that God is supporting the *old man*, weak, wicked, imperfect, and ignorant as he is, to confound the wise and mighty and bring to nought things that are . . . Infidels, Deists, Universalists, Sectarians: All, all are chained to their seats, in perfect silence, for hours, yet days, to hear *The Old Stammering Man*. . . . Oh, my Br., it makes me feel like a worm, a poor feeble creature. For it is God only that could produce such an effect on such audiences. Yet it gives me confidence.”¹⁰⁵

Pastor Fleming noted the same atmosphere. As he wrote, Miller

“simply takes the sword of the spirit, unsheathed and naked, and lays its sharp edge on the naked heart, and it cuts! That is all. Before the edge of this mighty weapon, infidelity falls, and Universalism withers. False foundations vanish, and Babel merchants wonder.”¹⁰⁶

Yet, the solemnity was not without colour or taste. As Miller wrote,

“They have reported that I was insane, and had been in a mad-house seven years. If they had said [that I was] in a mad world for fifty-seven years I must plead guilty to the charge.”¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, Miller’s kindness and benevolent countenance was not necessarily a permanent presence. Although he was loving and patient with the common folk, at

¹⁰² Lynn *Record*, as quoted in Isaac Wellcome, 75.

¹⁰³ Cincinnati *Commercial*, quoted in *Signs of the Times*, Apr. 15 (1840: 14; quoted in Froom, *Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, vol. 4, 688.

¹⁰⁴ *The Fountain*, quoted in Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message*, 248.

¹⁰⁵ William Miller, *Letter to his son*, Nov. 17, 1838.

¹⁰⁶ Fleming, *Signs of the Times*, Apr. 15 (1840): 14.

¹⁰⁷ Himes, *Views of Prophecies*, 57; George Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2010), 45.

times the clergy were for him “dumb dogs,” “ravening wolves,” “wise-heads,” and “wise-acres” who loved the word “reverend” to be attached to their names. He held that God would ultimately deal with such “priestly dandies” who had their “conscience cased in corsets of steel.”¹⁰⁸ Yet, he was compassionate towards those he wounded, and severely judged his own actions: “I find that as I grow old, I grow more peevish, and cannot bear so much contradiction. Therefore, I am uncharitable and severe.”¹⁰⁹

2.6 SDA Inheritance from Connexionism and Millerism

The main inheritance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the Christian Connexion was the strong opposition to *creeds*; often underscored by the expression “no creed but the Bible.” Adherence to Scripture and the rejection of church tradition as possessing any doctrinal authority yielded a secondary inheritance from Connexionism, which came with the anti-Trinitarian theological position.

After the Great Disappointment of 1844, the Seventh-day Adventists regarded this debacle as chiefly caused by one non-biblical assumption,¹¹⁰ and became even more vigilant against any un-biblical creed and traditional assumption. SDAs also received from Millerism the first of their most distinctive and defining doctrines, which is often referred to as a *pillar* or a *landmark* doctrine; that is the doctrine of the *Present Truth*.

2.6.1 Pillar doctrines and ‘Present Truth’

The first pillar doctrine was the doctrine of the Second Advent, and it was established by Miller from biblical prophecies, as the goal of the Millerite theology was the preparation of the world to meet the Lord. Additional pillar doctrines were established

¹⁰⁸ Wayne R. Judd, “William Miller,” *The Disappointed*, 29; as quoted by Knight, *Brief History*, 45.

¹⁰⁹ Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 207.

¹¹⁰ The assumption that caused the disappointment was that nothing in heaven could need cleansing, therefore the cleansing of the sanctuary (Dan 8:14) must refer to an event occurring on earth, contrary to Heb. 9:23–24.

after the disappointment, including the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, the seventh-day Sabbath, and conditional immortality.

The doctrine of the *Present Truth* became widely publicized through the name of the first periodical of the Sabbatarian Adventists, first published in July 1849, which was called *The Present Truth*. In his very first editorial, James White began his article by quoting 2 Peter 1:12: “Wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the PRESENT TRUTH,” and quickly continued to interpret it in the following way:

“In Peter’s time there was present truth, or truth applicable to that present time. The Church has ever had a present truth. The present truth now, is that which shows present duty, and the right position for us who are about to witness the time of trouble, such as never was.”¹¹¹

James White’s concept of *The Present Truth* began with the time prophecies of Millerite Adventism, but expanded to include all forms of truth considered essential to preparing for the Second Advent. The two concepts—*no creed but the Bible*—and—*The Present Truth*—were highly significant in the development of the Adventist views of God; both of these being reflected in the current SDA statement of *Fundamental Beliefs*, which affirms in its preamble that,

“Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.”¹¹²

One might find somewhat ironic the very existence of this statement, and presume that it could be interpreted as a creedal statement. Although justifiable, such presumption might omit the fact that this statement was issued for administrative purpose in relation with the secular state, and it is not imposed internally as a devotional

¹¹¹ *Present Truth*, vol. 1, no. 1 (July 1849), 1; reproduced in *Earliest Seventh-day Adventist Periodicals*, Introduction by George R. Knight, Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2005.

¹¹² 28 *Fundamental Beliefs*, Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed July 8, 2016, <https://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28Beliefs-Web.pdf>.

statement; such as in the case of the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches which recite the Nicene Creed in a liturgical context.

2.7 The Role of EGW in the Development of SDA Theology

Ellen G. White is regarded perhaps as the most influential mind of the Seventh-day Adventism. Believed to have received the gift of prophecy, Ellen White lectured widely in America, Europe and Australia. She was also a prolific writer, and published the *Conflict of the Ages* series (in five volumes during 1888–1917), and *Testimonies for the Church* (in nine volumes written between 1855 and 1909.)

Ellen G. White is considered as one of the three main founders of Adventism. Her formation was Methodist and very early she adhered to William Miller's movement. As a Methodist, she was deeply influenced by the belief in the work of the Spirit.

At the age of 17 she had a powerful vision which was followed by a lifetime of revelations which she faithfully recorded. Her lifetime writings and visions were considered by the vast majority of the Adventists as divinely 'inspired counsel,' 'the inspired pen; as she emerged to be known as the 'Spirit of Prophecy.'

The role of EGW's visions and writings in the development of SDA theology had been the subject of considerable scholarship.¹¹³ Being attributed the status of "inspired writings," a logical question was raised both inside and outside Adventism:

What is the relationship of these writings with the Bible, the Inspired Word of God? What contribution (if any) do they have in forming the doctrines of the new denomination?

Two aspects of her role are noteworthy at this point. First, she always insisted that the Bible—not her writings—is the ultimate standard for doctrine. Second, she never

¹¹³ Merlin D. Burt, "Bibliographic Essay on Publications about Ellen G. White," *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, ed. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 201–280.

placed the authority of her own writings on the same level as that of the Bible. She always saw herself as a servant of the Word, pointing people to the Word. “Little heed is given to the Bible,” she wrote, “and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.”¹¹⁴ Many statements she made are very clear on the relationship between her writings and the Bible. As she wrote on one occasion,

“The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God’s Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. . . . Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God.”¹¹⁵

“The Spirit was not given —nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible, for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”¹¹⁶

“Our position and faith is in the Bible. And never do we want any soul to bring in the Testimonies ahead of the Bible.”¹¹⁷

“[Christ] pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the Word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith.”¹¹⁸

“Lay Sister White to one side. Do not quote my words again as long as you live until you can obey the Bible. When you make the Bible your food, your meat, and your drink, when you make its principles the elements of your character, you will know better how to receive counsel from God. I exalt the precious Word before you today. Do not repeat what I have said, saying, ‘Sister White said this’, and ‘Sister White said that’. Find out what the Lord God of Israel says, and then do what He commands.”¹¹⁹

Not only did EGW insist on the Bible alone as the final rule of faith, but her earliest writings did not explicitly take sides with either the Trinitarians, or the non-Trinitarians. She simply pointed out what she had read in Scripture, or reported what she had seen in her visions. Be it as it may, one could interpret her noncommittal position as ecclesiastic diplomacy, or theological uncertainty, or a simple acknowledgement that she herself was still learning along with the rest of the denomination. Nevertheless, EGW’s later writings were explicitly Trinitarian, which leads to the debate among historians, whether she *led* the process of change, or was

¹¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 30.

¹¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 256.

¹¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 7.

¹¹⁷ White, *Evangelism*, 256.

¹¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 39.

¹¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 33.

simply a *participant* (albeit an influential one) on the path of the denomination's learning, and growing experience.¹²⁰

2.8 The Development of Early SDA Views of the Godhead

The SDA's concept of the Godhead developed from two distinct streams.

In the first stream, the two main founders came from the Christian Connexion. Because of their rejection of theological tradition as having any doctrinal authority, Connexionists were anti-creedal, and many were Arian or semi-Arian views. It had already been pointed out that some of their objections to the Trinity were actually reactions against *distortions* of Trinitarianism, such as Modalistic Monarchianism and tri-theism.¹²¹

In the second stream, the leaders and the lay members of the denomination came from a wide variety of churches, mostly Trinitarian. In the spirit of American freedom, a major motivation in leaving their previous churches was to avoid the creeds, and the imposition of conformity by a traditionally European authority. Because they rejected creeds in general and declined to create a creed of their own, they tended to retain their previous beliefs in areas that did not collide with the Adventist pillar doctrines regarded as Present Truth, and as such they were simply ignored by the majority.

It is important to note that as all SDA doctrines were anchored in the Present Truth and preparation for the Second Coming, the earliest Adventists tended to disregard traditional debates over ancient Christian controversies and consider them as irrelevant from their point of view.

Nevertheless, the strong anti-Trinitarian leanings of the inner circle of SDA leaders were not necessarily shared by the membership as a whole. In fact, the SDA

¹²⁰ Jerry Moon, "The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41 (Autumn 2003): 275–292.

¹²¹ Whidden, Moon, Reeve, *The Trinity*, 193.

Church was composed by Christians from different denominations, and most of them were Trinitarian. Some even felt that the Adventist anti-Trinitarianism was a violation of their conscience, and, as a result, some pastors refused to minister or gave up their convictions rather than live with double standards. For example, elder Ambrose C. Spicer had a Baptist background, and was a Trinitarian before becoming an Adventist minister. He grew so weary of anti-Trinitarianism prevailing in the SDA Church in Battle Creek, Michigan, that he quit preaching for a period of time.¹²²

Further evidence of this division of beliefs is the remark of Adventist minister D. T. Bourdeau, as he wrote in the church paper in 1890.

“Although we claim to be believers in, and worshipers of, only one God, I have thought that there are as many gods among us as there are conceptions of the Deity.”¹²³

The variety of views among persons in full church fellowship was only possible because of a strong consensus on the “no creed but the Bible” slogan, as the basis for the distinctive SDA doctrines was the Present Truth.

Regarded from a historical perspective, SDA doctrines are anchored in their view of Present Truth. Regarded from a theological perspective, the Adventist acceptance of a Trinitarian view of God began with the recognition of the equality of Christ with God the Father. This belief emerged relatively early in SDA history.

By 1870, James White, the most outspoken critic of the Trinity doctrine among early Adventists,¹²⁴ came to recognize that the Adventist understanding of the “equality of Christ with God” was almost an identical concept as the “full divinity of Christ” in the Trinitarian view. Around 1870s, James White wrote that “our view is so near to that of the Trinitarian that we apprehend no conflict here.”¹²⁵

¹²² Jerry Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 1: Historical Overview,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41 (Spring 2003): 115.

¹²³ D. T. Bourdeau, “We May Partake of the Fullness of the Father and the Son,” *Review and Herald*, Nov. 18 (1890): 707; as quoted by Moon, “The Adventist Trinity Debate,” 115, 119.

¹²⁴ See James White, *Day-Star*, January 24, 1846, 25; quoted in Moon, “Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2, (Autumn 2003): 275–292 (here 275).

¹²⁵ James White, “The Two Bodies,” *RH* Oct. 12 (1876): 116; as quoted in Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 178.

The next step in the development of Adventist Trinitarianism came in the 1880s, when it became widely recognized that only one who is Himself God or equal with God, could effectively intercede for human salvation. If Christ is inferior to the Father, then He could only plead for our salvation as a beggar. But if Christ is co-equal with the Father, co-eternal with the Father, Almighty God with Almighty God, then he pleads not as a beggar, but as an attorney claiming the legal rights of his client.

Thus, Ellet J. Waggoner's identification of Christ as equal with the Father emerges from his recognition that Christ's equality with the Father was *necessary* in order for Christ to be an effective mediator. This new belief became the cornerstone of the SDA position on the Trinity; however the path toward this theological realization was by no means easy.

Mediation included not only the expiation of sin, but the revelation of the character of God. Therefore, Christ's mediation is eternal, the eternal basis of our eternal life (Heb 7:25; 10:14) because, as Calvin had once stated, "only God can represent God."¹²⁶

2.9 Early Adventist Christology: An Excursus

Yet again, one could honestly ask whether the choice of 'Arianism' by the Seventh-day Adventists was an identity-driven necessity (to remain distinct from the Catholic Church),¹²⁷ or it was the result of an arcane Christology that the founding minds of Adventist theology never fully explained.

¹²⁶ Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 248.

¹²⁷ Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 157–164.

The presumption that the choice of Arianism was a necessity—perhaps to follow the general path of Protestantism as an opposition Catholicism—seems more plausible simply because, at its inception, Christology was treated in an unsophisticated fashion.

It is obvious that the protagonists of Adventism used a limited Christology, since their main preoccupation was to focus on the return of Christ. This seems to make sense particularly as Christ is often compared (even sometimes identified) with Archangel Michael, perhaps in an attempt to draw inferences and parallels with the salvation of the Hebrews from Egypt, as they were pursued by the Egyptian army, and God came to their defence in the form of a pillar of fire, or as an angel. It seems safe to assume however that the identity of Jesus Christ does not fall in line with that of a simple angel, since it is obvious that the expected return of Christ is a divine event in itself.

During early Adventism, the Trinitarian theology encountered a challenging doctrinal excursus in establishing the divinity of Jesus Christ, and His redemptive role. The debates took various positions, ranging from monophysitism, to arianism, derivationism, emanationism, subordinationism, monothelism and apollinarianism, and the Nicene doctrine—even though such standard terminology was rarely used. Furthermore, this excursus was not necessarily triggered by a possible influence of early Christian literature, since extremely few such writings were available in English at that time, and those that were available were generally perceived as the doctrinal arsenal of the Catholic Church, and as such were avoided or challenged.

This excursus was mainly the result of an independent sense of reflection manifested by the Adventist theologians. Therefore, it can be safe to assert that the doctrine developed independently of the early Christian debates and perhaps as parallel exercises of theological intuition; even though they both seem to display a common pool of syllogisms. Conversely, the syllogisms were as natural during the first five centuries of Christianity as they were during the 19th century North America, simply

because they attempted to answer the same questions. Was Jesus God for real? Can God take a human body? Was Jesus eternal? Was He created?

To explain complicated doctrines and essentially calibrate them with the Scripture demanded a strong sense of visualization. Abstract concepts had to be visualized through heuristic devices not only for purpose of mnemonic associations, but to provide a safe analogy between the visible and the invisible. It was also necessary to maintain a sense of ambiguity over something as mysterious and crucial to one's salvation as God Himself. As part of communication, visualization of abstract concepts and their explanation through symbolic language was necessary to indentify one's needs, and *label* them, as much as to identify and classify something as dangerous or irrelevant.

One of the most comprehensive papers to summarize the nature of this doctrinal excursus during early Adventism was written by Norman H. Young, and published in the *Adventist Heritage*, under the title "Christology & Atonement in Early Adventism."¹²⁸

The significance of this paper for this thesis cannot be stressed enough, since it draws parallels between the early Christian debates—which constitute the basis of Orthodox Christology—and the emergence of various Adventist doctrines along with a paradigm shift marked by 1888. As Norman H. Young writes,

"Unlike the two-nature Christology of modern Adventism, the majority of the early Seventh-Day Adventist writers worked within the one-nature model of the Alexandrian Fathers. There were two distinct phases: up to 1888 the emphasis was on the divine Word's metamorphosis into humanity, so that the death on Calvary might be a divine and not merely a human sacrifice. However, after 1888, the major concern was to present the divine power as the energizing cause of Christ's triumph over human sin, a divine power now available to mankind."¹²⁹

In summarizing Young's thematic analysis, it is important to clarify that what he means by the expression "one nature model of the Alexandrian Fathers" is a reference to

¹²⁸ Norman H. Young, "Christology and Atonement in Early Adventism," *Adventist Heritage: A Journal of Adventist History*, Vol 9, Nr2 Fall (1984): 30–39.

¹²⁹ Young, 38.

the historical Monophysitism,¹³⁰ and the expression “Antiochene model,” is used in reference to the official Nicene doctrine.

The strength of Young’s analysis is that he surveys the early Christian views, and explains the interplay between these views and the protagonists of Trinitarian theology during early Adventism. As he writes,

“[t]he early Adventists had difficulty accepting the Nicene doctrine, and this resulted in a Christology which was quite different from the early church models. The first tentative Adventist statements concerning Christ’s pre-incarnational origins were thoroughly Arian in that the earliest writers conceived of Christ as a heavenly created being.”¹³¹

While extrapolating upon the nature of the debates, Young surveys some of the most prominent Adventist theologians of the nineteenth century, such as H. C. Blanchard; Dudley M. Canright;¹³² Roswell F. Cottrell; C. E. Harroun; M.W. Howard; D. D. Hull; Alonzo T. Jones; W.W. Prescott; Uriah Smith; James M. Stephenson; Ellet J. Waggoner; and Joseph H. Waggoner.

The first debates surrounding the divine nature of Christ—regarded exclusively from the pre-incarnation perspective—were entirely Arian.

In 1854, J.M. Stephenson stated that Jesus “must be a created being; and as such, his life and immortality must depend upon the Father’s will, just as much as angels, or redeemed men,” and in 1859, Uriah Smith spoke of Jesus as “the first created being”. However their views were not accepted.¹³³ In fact, Dudley M. Canright denied that Jesus was a created being, and adopted a view which included emanationism, derivationism, and subordinationism. Canright’s view dominated for the second half of

¹³⁰ As briefly explained in the introduction, as well as in the first chapter of this thesis, Monophysitism is the Christological doctrine adopted by the Oriental Orthodox Church following split from the Nicene, over Christ’s nature(s) during the Council of Chalcedon in A.D.461.

¹³¹ Young, 30.

¹³² Dudley M. Canright later abandoned Adventism and became one of its resolute enemies, as he wrote and published a rebuttal of the faith titled, *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced*; a work that became highly popular among the Baptists.

¹³³ Young, 30.

the 19th century, as it was shared by Joseph H. Waggoner, Alonzo T. Johnes, Ellet J. Waggoner, Uriah Smith, W.W. Prescott and others.¹³⁴

Yet again, the question led to the struggle for Adventist identity (as to avoid the suspicion of being pseudo-Catholics as far as the doctrine of Trinity was concerned, and to the question of salvation, posed in a most sincere and profound way. As Young attempted to explain,

“Why did the great majority of the Adventist pioneers renounce the Trinity and the eternity of Christ?”—asked Young. “They used various arguments against the doctrine of the Trinity, pointing to its rational absurdity, its papal origins (as they saw it), and its unscriptural nature; but the most frequent argument that they used against the Trinity was that it demanded a two-nature Christology, and this they believed, denied the atonement. If Christ was fully divine and fully human in the one person as the Trinitarians averred, then, said the early Adventists, only his human nature died and the cross provided only a human sacrifice.”¹³⁵

Perhaps unaware of the stimulating intricacies offered by the doctrines of kenosis and hypostatic union—at least as an exercise of mind of anything at all—the rationale offered by the Adventist pioneers was a most sincere rationalization of a dogmatic complexity, since any error could compromise the divine promise for salvation.

“Since the eternal God cannot die,” wrote Young, “only Christ’s humanity or body expired on the cross and therefore (according to the Adventist pioneers’ understanding of orthodox Trinitarianism), his death was only a human sacrifice and not a divine atonement.”¹³⁶

Therefore, only a one-nature Christ would preserve the divinity; hence the preference for the Monophysite views.¹³⁷

In an attempt to visualize and defend the preference for the Monophysite view, theologians such as J.M. Stephenson insisted that Christ was neither a “duplex entity,”¹³⁸ nor a “two whole nature swivel,” as Roswell F. Cottrell put it.¹³⁹ H. C. Blanchard further derided the two-nature Nicene Christology by offering a rather grotesque visualization: “take one man and one God,” wrote Blanchard, “join them

¹³⁴ Ibid, 32.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 33.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 36.

together and you have one Christ.”¹⁴⁰ Indubitably, this was either malcontent, or the illustration of an unsophisticated view, since a person’s visualization reflects that person’s ability to imagine abstract concepts.

Nevertheless, concerned with the question of how to interpret Christ more accurately—from the logic of divine salvation through sacrifice—in 1871, M. W. Howard wrote an article titled “Jesus, Divine and Human,” and published it in the *Review and Herald*. In this article Howard emphasized that Christ’s human nature was neglected, and used a language which his Adventist contemporaries were denouncing. Even though this was a major step, as Young clarifies,

“the real shift in Adventist incarnational thought of the nineteenth century was not a change from the one-nature Christology of the early writers, but a radically new emphasis on the soteriological significance of the incarnation. . . . Prior to 1888 the stress had been on the transformation of the divine Word into human existence in order to provide a divine atonement.”¹⁴¹

In this enterprise, the main pioneer of the new perspective was Ellet J. Waggoner, who accepted that Christ is a deity who proceeded from the Father, but who was subordinated to the Father. According to Young,

“Waggoner was clearly an heir to the Alexandrian tradition of the one divine nature united to human flesh in order to triumph over human sin and corruption. Just as the Alexandrians had taught that the Logos’ victory in the flesh was ‘so that Christ may transmit this condition to the whole of humanity by participation,’ so Waggoner also declared that the Word descended to the level of sinful man, ‘in order that he might exalt man to his own spotless purity.’”¹⁴²

As Young concludes his survey of the early Adventist Christology, he emphasizes that during the nineteenth century there were two distinct phases in the development of Christology marked by 1888 as a midpoint. Thus, prior to 1888,

“the emphasis was on the divine Word’s metamorphosis into humanity, so that the death on Calvary might be a divine and not merely a human sacrifice. However, after 1888, the major concern was to present the divine power as the energizing cause of Christ’s triumph over human sin, a divine power now available to mankind.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 37–38.

¹⁴² Ibid., 38.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

With this perspective set, the development of Adventist Christology bears the imprint of the birth pains of a new religious identity, which strives to set its own course of meaning and structure.

2.10 Conclusion

Concerned with the identity of Jesus Christ in the context of Adventism, this chapter surveyed the debates which erupted in the context of millennialism, and which led to the 1888 momentum; that is the “Righteous by Faith Conference” in Minneapolis. This excursus accounted for episodes which resuscitated the theological paradigms once raised by the Early Christians. These new (yet old) arguments and themes (already presented in the previous chapter) erupted in an environment dominated by the profound social and spiritual transformations of American Protestantism, which was infused by a newfound sense of freedom, nonconformity, and resentment toward dogmatic control. Within the exploration of the historic and the theological milieu that surrounded the birth of Adventism this chapter surveyed some key debates centered on how Jesus Christ related to the Godhead, and continued with an analysis of how Protestant denominations such as Anabaptism, Restorationism, Methodism and Deism had set the stage for Adventist Christology, by creating a fertile ground for theological debates, and also by challenging the incremental shift from Arianism to Trinitarianism. In doing so, special attention was given to the role played by the Millerites (particularly by Ellen G. White) in changing the direction of the Adventist dogmatic discourse in the aftermath of the 1888 Conference; a topic that will be further explored in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, one structural limitation of this chapter—which the author takes full responsibility for—is the depth of parallels drawn between Adventism and Eastern Christianity from sociologic and historic perspectives. In an attempt to gloss over such limitation, some of the glaring commonalities between Adventism and Eastern

Christianity had been engaged furtively through references to the search for freedom in general and freedom of worship in particular. The general search for freedom and the attempt to escape an old oppressing world was paramount to each church.

If, for the Adventists, this old world was represented by the political power of England, and by the symbolic religious authority of Rome, for the Eastern Christians, the political and religious power was combined into the Ottoman yoke, and the enemy was far more real and stronger. Therefore, the Eastern Christians fomented their search for freedom predominantly as a spiritual warfare, in the form of abstinence of thoughts and anger management. The derailing of the desire for physical retaliation into a spiritual warfare was made obvious also by the popularity of a book authored by an Italian theologian, Lorenzo Scupoli, *The Unseen Warfare*, which was translated into Greek and Slavonic and widely circulated; while, ironically, being credited to an Orthodox monk rather than to its real author.¹⁴⁴ It was perhaps this quietude of the spiritual war which preceded the flood of nationalism and lit the anti-Ottoman Revolutions across the Balkans. As for the more sophisticated theological debates on Christology, these were mainly the effects of triangulation by the missionary activities of the Jesuits (on the Catholic side), and those of the Lutherans and Calvinists (on the Protestant side) within the borders and at the periphery of the Austro–Hungarian Empire.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Marian Gh. Simion, “War and the Right to Life: Orthodox Christian Reflections” pp. 188–206 in Sumner Twiss, Marian Gh. Simion, and Rodney L. Petersen (Eds.) *Religion and Public Policy: Human Rights, Conflict, and Ethics* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 191.

¹⁴⁵ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Cluj–Napoca: Editura Dacia, 2002), 171–174.

Chapter 3

Minneapolis 1888: The Righteousness by Faith Conference and the Aftermath of the Adventist Trinitarian Impulses

3.1 The Background of the Founding Fathers of Adventism

This chapter continues the historical analysis of the Christological debates analyzed in the previous chapter, through the exploration of the religious background of the new converts who apparently paved the way toward the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology.

The General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held in Minneapolis in 1888 had been the most stirring, studied, and debated event in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist history. The subject of “the Righteous by Faith” is also a dominant topic in the Adventist internal dialogue which often overshadows other typical Adventist topics such as the *sanctuary doctrine*, the *2300-Day Prophecy* of Daniel 8:14, *the 1844* as the year of the coming of the Lord, *health reform*, *ecumenism*, the pre- or post-fall human nature of Christ, and many others.

Various subjects attached to this conference constitute various milestones in their history, and major turning points in the theological development of Adventism¹ that made up the “momentous General Conference session.”²

Reflecting on this event, Gerhard Pfandl, the associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, described the historic resonance of the event as one of the most memorable events in the Adventist history. As Pfandl wrote,

¹ Gerhard Pfandl, “Minneapolis 1888: An Adventist Watershed,” *Adventist World* 6:1 (January 2010): 24–25.

² Woodrow W. Whidden II, *Ellen White on Salvation. A Chronological Study* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Institute for Theological Advancement, 1995) 69–117.

“For more than 100 years, “Seventh-day Adventists have looked back at the 1888 General Conference session as a milestone in their history, a major turning point in their theological development. It is considered the most important theological conference in the church’s history. Though lasting less than a month, both the Minneapolis session (Oct. 17-Nov. 4, 1888) and the ministerial institute that preceded it (Oct. 10-16) changed the shape of Adventism.”³

This conference entered into Adventist history as the “Righteousness by Faith Conference” (RBF), because this was the most prominent topic debated by the delegates to the Conference. The effects of 1888 had been felt widely as the Adventist Church had immediately begun to display non-Arian and pro-Trinitarian positions.

In a doctrinal sense, Minneapolis 1888 is located in time somewhere between the Arian/semi-Arian stage; signalling the first steps taken by Adventism toward Trinitarianism.

In retrospect, one may ask whether Minneapolis 1888 was both the catalyst and the trigger of a long journey undertaken by Adventism from its Arian and semi-Arian beginnings to the official adoption of the doctrine of the Trinity during the General Conference in 1946.

Did the Minneapolis General Conference and its RBF emphasis play a role in the Arian–Trinitarian paradigm shift of Adventism? In what degree, if any, was this conference responsible for changing the theological course of Adventism?

These questions have been asked before and partially addressed in previous studies. However, the influence of Minneapolis’ potential for change in the context of the Adventist view of the Godhead has not been thoroughly evaluated by any major analysis.

3.2 The Adventist Godhead View at the Time of the Minneapolis GC

The theological landscape of the Seventh–day Adventist Church experienced an unusual tremor when, in 1963, Erwin R. Gane, a student at Andrews University, submitted his

³ Pfandl, Ibid., 25.

MA thesis titled, *The Arian and Anti-Trinitarian Views Presented in the Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the E. G. White Answer*. For the Adventists, this was a wakeup call, with Gane being the first to approach this topic from this angle, and to publish it as a degree paper. Three years later, in 1969, Russell Holt wrote a term paper titled, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination: Its Rejection and Acceptance,” and Merlin Burt wrote a research paper titled, “The Demise of Semi-Arianism and anti-Trinitarianism in Adventist Theology, 1888–1957.”

Other Adventist scholars such as Jerry Moon, Woodrow Whidden, or independent scholars such as Pastor Max Hatton from Australia, or ministries such as the “1888 Message Study Committee,” or institutions such as Andrews University have dealt with the same topic albeit from different perspectives. Their studies have elucidated the theological spectrum of incipient Adventism along with numerous factors that led the SDA Church closer to a Trinitarian understanding of the Godhead.

Nevertheless, Minneapolis 1888 had not adequately been taken into consideration as a factor. The common denominator of all of these studies reveals that the Adventists were “as uniform in opposing Trinitarianism as they were in advocating the belief in the Second Coming.”⁴ Yet, there were numerous Trinitarians among them, although they were rarely making themselves heard. One Trinitarian Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Ambrose C. Spicer,⁵ stated that he “grew so offended at the anti-Trinitarian atmosphere in Battle Creek that he ceased preaching.”⁶

As noted in the previous chapter, among the pioneers of Adventism, the anti-Trinitarians constituted the majority. As historian George Knight contends, the real

⁴ Mervyn C. Maxwell, “Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology: An Historical Survey,” *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies*, eds. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 1981) 530; as quoted by Richard Rice, “Questions on Doctrine and Questions on Christ.”

⁵ Ambrose C. Spicer was the father of W. A. Spicer, President of the General Conference of the SDA Church 1922–1930.

⁶ A. W. Spalding to H. C. Lacey, *Adventist Heritage Center*, Andrews University, June 2, (1947)

founder of Seventh-day Adventism was Joseph Bates.⁷ Bates came from the Christian Connexion, an Arian and anti-creedal church, and for him it was impossible to believe that

“the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, was also the Almighty God, the Father, one and the same being.”⁸

As it became obvious, Joseph Bates was opposing Modalism, while thinking he was opposing the Trinity.

James White, another prominent founder, rejected

“the old unscriptural Trinitarian creed, that Jesus Christ is the very and Eternal God.”⁹

Nevertheless, his view of Godhead remained unclear because he did not distinguish between the divinity of Christ, which makes Him one with the Father, and the person of Christ, which makes Him distinct from the Father. What it is clear, however, is that James White was not opposing the Trinity as such. For him, a Trinity in a singularity was a logical impossibility. ‘How could the Three be One, he often asked himself?’ In his mind there had to be a logic and a structure following a causal type of relations. Therefore, he believed that the Father is the first and the Son is second:

“The Father is the greatest in that He is first. The Son is next in authority because He has been given all things.”¹⁰

Furthermore, S. N. Haskell was convinced that Jesus Christ had a beginning, and was a created being. In a semi-Arian fashion, Haskell reflected the following:

“Back in the ages, which finite mind cannot fathom, the Father and Son were alone in the universe. Christ was the first begotten of the Father, and to Him Jehovah made known the divine plan of Creation.”¹¹

John N. Andrews possessed vast biblical knowledge, but for him, the Trinity was unacceptable both theologically and historically. As he wrote,

⁷ George Knight, *Joseph Bates, the Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism*, Review and Herald Publ. Assn, 2004. (See work in its entirety for an overview of the statement.)

⁸ Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates*, Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn. 1868.

⁹ James White, *Day Star*, Jan.24 (1846): 25.

¹⁰ James White, *Review & Herald*, January 4 (1881), 1.

¹¹ Stephen N. Haskell, *The Story of the Seer of Patmos* (Ed, 1905), 93, 94.

“The doctrine of the Trinity was established in the church by the council of Nicea, A.D. 325. This doctrine destroys the personality of God, and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The infamous measures by which it was forced upon the church which appear upon the pages of ecclesiastical history might well cause every believer in that doctrine to blush.”¹²

It is obvious that he was also confusing God’s personhood with His essence. By stating that the doctrine of Trinity destroys the personality of the Father, and of His Son Jesus Christ, he exposes in fact both Monarchianist and Unitarian beliefs, which he confuses with Trinity. The oneness of essence in Trinity means something different if compared with Monarchianism. Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are one in essence but not the same in persons. Andrew also adds negative connotation to the doctrine of Trinity by invoking the forced imposition of the doctrine of Trinity by the ecclesiastical authorities. It may be that this negative report against the church and her methods was fashionable at that time; however the logic offered no connection with the content of the doctrine of Trinity unto itself.

Uriah Smith was one of the strongest anti-Trinitarians among the founders of Adventism. He was a keen Bible scholar and historian, and a very influential leader of Adventism. Even though Smith was a staunch Arian, later he became semi-Arian.

“‘Let all the angels of God worship him.’ Heb. 1:6. These testimonies show that Christ is now an object of worship equally with the Father; but they do not prove that with Him he holds an eternity of past existence.”¹³

However, on a different occasion, Uriah Smith stated that

“God alone is without beginning. At the earliest epoch when a beginning could be—a period so remote that to finite minds it is essentially eternity—appeared the Word. His beginning was not like that of any other being in the universe. It is set forth in the mysterious expressions, ‘his [God’s] only begotten Son’ (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9), ‘the only begotten of the Father’ (John 1:14), and, ‘I proceeded forth and came from God.’ (John 8:42). Thus it appears that by some divine impulse or process, not creation, known only to Omniscience, and possible only to Omnipotence, the Son of God appeared. And then the Holy Spirit (by an infirmity of translation called ‘the Holy Ghost’), the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the divine afflatus and medium of their power, representative of them both (Ps. 139:7), was in existence also.”¹⁴

Finally, Ellen G. White, “the prophetic voice,” and “the messenger of the Lord,” has been in recent times perceived as holding an unclear view of the

¹² J. N. Andrews, *Review & Herald*, vol. 6, no. 24, March 6 (1855), 185.

¹³ Uriah Smith, *Daniel And The Revelation* (1882), 430.

¹⁴ Uriah Smith, *Looking Unto Jesus* (1898), 10.

Godhead. At the same time, to a certain group of interpreters, she appeared to be a “closet Trinitarian,”¹⁵ as some have assumed,¹⁶ yet for others she was an Arian, and later a semi-Arian, just like her husband James White. Other scholars suspected that Ellen G. White was a Trinitarian simply because she came from the Methodist Church, and had a very deep appreciation for John Wesley.

The questions are these: Was she an ecclesiastical politician trying to avoid premature and unnecessary conflict inside the Adventist church, and thus a “mute Trinitarian,” or was she Arian? Did her position change with time as she grew in her understanding of the Godhead?¹⁷

Because these questions demand responses, I will attempt to answer some of these within the proceeding pages. Also, based on the observation that certain founding fathers mistakenly took other views of God, as being the doctrine of the Trinity, I will investigate which of these “anti-Trinitarians” views were expressly opposed to.

3.2.1 The Initial Anti-Creedal Stance of Adventism

As noted in the previous chapter, some of the most prominent pioneers of Adventism, Joseph Bates, James White, and John Loughborough, came from the anti-creedal Christian Connexion. They brought this position with them, and maintained it in the newly formed Adventist Church. They viewed the very notion of a ‘creed’ as being something dangerous and leading to apostasy. Their phobia of creeds is perhaps best described by John Norton Loughborough, who wrote that,

“[t]he first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth, to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Somebody who privately is a Trinitarian, but is afraid to confess it publically for fear of possible retaliation.

¹⁶ John Kiesz, “History of the Trinity Doctrine,” Study No. 132., accessed on April 5, 2017, <http://www.giveshare.org/BibleStudy/132.trinityhistory.html>

¹⁷ Widden, Moon, Reeve, *The Trinity*, (See introduction.)

¹⁸ John Norton Loughborough, “Doings of the Battle Creek Conference’, Oct. 5 & 6, 1861” *Review and Herald* 18/19 (1861): 148.

With this background, James White rejected all forms of creed except for one: the Bible. As he proclaimed, ‘the Bible is our only creed,’ and together with A. T. Jones and others, J. White identified the adoption of a creed as one of the features of the apostate church, or the ‘mystic Babylon’.

3.3 The Righteousness by Faith General Conference: The messages and the Messengers

3.3.1 The State of the Church

At the time of Minneapolis, Adventism was deep into legalism, salvation by works, perfectionism, and a lack of the true grace of God. The light of Righteousness by Faith (RBF) was nearly extinct.

“Unfortunately, because of the heavy emphasis on the law, spirituality waned and not a few became decidedly legalistic. Pride, self-assurance, and complacency entered our ranks. What was missing was a living experience with Christ—the joy and peace that comes from a relationship with Christ. The law and keeping the law became all-important.”¹⁹

G. Pfandl points to one of the most acute pains of 1888 Adventism:

“Until 1888 it was largely thought that righteousness acceptable to God could be achieved (with the help of the Holy Spirit, of course) by obedience to the commandments. In other words, sanctification was seen as the basis of salvation.”²⁰

E. G. White graphically describes the deplorable spiritual condition of the Adventist denomination at the time of the Minneapolis General Conference:

“But all here—ministers, parents, and children—needed a work done for them which they did not realize. . . . Some even of those who were preaching the word were as destitute of the Spirit of God as were the mountains of Gilboa of dew and rain.”²¹

3.3.2 Introducing the Act and the Main Actors

From the outset of the Minneapolis General Conference meetings, the existence of two camps could be easily observed and confirmed: the promoters of RBF (A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner), and the representatives of the traditional, “forty years old Adventist

¹⁹ Gerhardt Pfandl, ‘Minneapolis 1888, an Adventist Watershed’, *Adventist Heritage*.

²⁰ Pfandl, *Ibid*.

²¹ E.G. White, *Review and Herald*, October 21, 1884.

views,” G. Butler, the General Conference president, and the editor of the *Review and Herald*, Uriah Smith.

A.T. Jones was born in 1850. In 1870, he joined the US Army for three years. There he engaged himself in the study of Bible prophecy as seen in the light of history. While rapidly ascending the church’s ranks, he concentrated his work on publishing and writing ministry. He also became a renowned defender of religious liberty in the USA in times of painful instability.

Ellet J. Waggoner, the main proponent of the RBF doctrine at Minneapolis, was born in 1855 into an SDA family, and studied medicine. In 1882, at the age of 27, he had a powerful spiritual experience while attending a camp meeting. During this revelation, Waggoner became convinced of the power of the divine sacrifice to save humanity. As he wrote later,

“Christ is primarily the Word of God, the expression of God’s thought; and the Scriptures are the Word of God simply because they reveal Christ. It was with this belief that I began my real study of the Bible, thirty-four years ago (1882). At that time Christ was set forth before my eyes ‘evidently crucified’ before me. I was sitting a little apart from the body of the congregation in the large tent at a camp meeting in Healdsburg, one gloomy Sabbath afternoon. I have no idea what was the subject of the discourse. Neither a word, nor a text have I ever remembered. All that has remained with me was what I saw. Suddenly a light shone round me, and the tent was, for me, far more brilliantly lighted than if the noon-day sun had been shining, and I saw Christ hanging on the cross, crucified for me. In that moment I had my first positive knowledge, which came like an overwhelming flood, that God loved me, and that Christ died for me. God and I were the only beings I was conscious of in the universe. I knew then, by actual sight, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; I was the whole world with all its sin. I am sure that Paul’s experience on the way to Damascus was no more real than mine . . . I resolved at once that I would study the Bible in the light of that revelation, in order that I might help others to see the same truth. I have always believed that every part of the Bible must set forth, with more or less vividness, that glorious revelation (Christ crucified).”²²

In 1883 he stopped practicing medicine and dedicated himself entirely to the ministry of the Gospel, mostly in an editorial capacity working for the *Signs of the Times*; the leading Adventist publication on the West Coast.

²² E.J. Waggoner, ‘The Last Confession of Faith’, Written shortly before his death on Tuesday, May 16, 1916.

In 1884 Ellet J. Waggoner met A. T. Jones, and two years later they became the co-editors of the *Signs of the Times*. Five years prior to the famous Minneapolis Conference, E. J. Waggoner and his associate A. T. Jones began publishing a series of RBF articles.

In the East at the church headquarters in Michigan, the General Conference president, George Butler, and *Review and Herald* editor Uriah Smith were the most prominent and influential names in the Adventist hierarchy of that time.

George Butler was born in 1834 in Vermont, as the son of an Adventist family. He became president of the Iowa Conference as a result of the resignation of B.F. Snook, the previous president of the conference. Later, Butler became president of the General Conference, and served two times, as James White, resigned from the same position for health reasons. Butler is remembered for his devotion to the established theological positions of the Adventist Church, and for his fierce opposition to the RBF message presented by A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and E. G. White during the 1888 General Conference.

Uriah Smith was born in 1832 and grew up in the Millerite Adventist movement. After the 'Great Disappointment' he lost interest in religion but later his interest was revived by his sister Annie, who became a Sabbath keeper and joined the Sabbatarian Adventists. As an intellectual by formation and a good administrator, Smith held various positions at the highest level of the Adventist Church. For nearly half a century he kept the editor's chair for the most circulated Adventist magazine, the *Review and Herald*.

These two camps soon entered into a conflict at Minneapolis: Butler and Smith standing for the old Adventist view propagated through the *Review and Herald* (in the East), and Jones and Waggoner promoting the new RBF view through the *Signs of the Times* (in the West.) The old view believers perceived the new view as a dangerous course and a new theology suspected as being a deadly heresy.

LeRoy Froom, a respected though controversial historian of the SDA Church, confirms that,

“Jones was accordingly regarded by some as the fosterer of a new historical ‘heresy,’ while Waggoner was thought to be projecting a doctrinal deviation—which departures would have to be settled at the Minneapolis meeting.”²³

Already, in 1886, the two camps were ‘exchanging’ heated articles published in their respective magazines, *Signs of the Times* and *Review and Herald*.

“In 1886 O. A. Johnson had published an article in the *Review and Herald* entitled ‘The Two Laws, in which he stated ‘that the law in Galatians is the ceremonial law’. A few months later, E. J. Waggoner ran a series of nine articles in the *Signs*, in which he claimed that the law in Galatians is the moral law.”²⁴

The two opposing theological positions literally polarized the entire Adventist audience, producing tension in three areas: *theological*, *generational*, and *administrative*.

1. **Theological—the ‘old, man-centred view versus the ‘new, Christ-centred’ view:** During the relatively short time of her existence, the SDA Church produced her own theology that reflected her history and nature. In her tendency to be different she departed from Protestant theology and even denounced parts of it as false. Jones and Waggoner re-studied this theology and adopted most of it as their own theology, proposing it to the Adventist Church at Minneapolis.
2. **Generational—older versus younger:** The two RBF proponents, Waggoner and Jones, were comparatively young—30- and 33-years old, respectively, which was brought as an argument against their theology. Because their opponents were older and had been in ministry for a long period, this was interpreted as a reason to trust their theology over that of Jones and Waggoner.
3. **Two administratively subordinated ministers versus the two highest denominational:** Jones and Waggoner—relatively young thou experienced evangelists who had recently become editors for *Signs of the Times*, whereas Butler and Smith were veterans of many years of leadership at the highest level of the Adventist Church.

²³ LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 241.

²⁴ Gerhardt Pfandl, *Minneapolis 1888*, an Adventist Watershed, Ibid.

Ellen G. White tried to stay out of the conflict,²⁵ but she was finally triangulated and ended up fighting for the “new theology,” which, as she confirmed, had been her own theology for the “last 45 years.”

The initial point of disagreement, as previously mentioned, was the identity of the ‘law in Galatians’, ‘the schoolmaster.’²⁶ E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones stated that the ‘schoolmaster’ in Galatians 3:24 represented *all* the law of God with the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath commandment, whereas G. Butler and U. Smith stated that the ‘schoolmaster’ represented *only* the ‘ceremonial law’—the sacrifices, the Tent and Temple services, the shadows of Christ’s ministry, but not the Ten Commandments that ‘shrine the Sabbath.’

The adoption of either of these positions would lead to two different types of salvation: by faith in Christ only, or by faith in Christ plus works.

By saying that the ‘schoolmaster’ was all the law of God, Waggoner dismissed the role of the law in salvation and attributed this role exclusively to Christ.

In contrast, by saying that the ‘schoolmaster’ is only the ‘ceremonial law’ and not the moral law of the Ten Commandments, Butler affirmed that obedience to this law plays a significant role, and has a part in our salvation. Therefore, salvation is by Christ plus obedience to the law. Butler’s was the traditional salvation view of Adventism, whereas Waggoner’s was seen as a deviation from the old landmarks.

The adoption of either of these two positions concerning the ‘schoolmaster’ in Galatians 3 would later lead to different conclusions concerning the nature of Christ. If salvation is exclusively through Christ, and knowing that only God can save, then Jesus is God in the full sense of the word. If salvation is by Christ plus obedience to the law,

²⁵ See letter 37, 1887, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 75–80.

²⁶ “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:23–26)

then Christ has a secondary place in the Godhead, because the man is a participant in his own salvation. These ideas were also reflected in the titles and contents of the two opposing books, one published by Butler, *The Law in Galatians*,²⁷ the other by Waggoner, *The Gospel in Galatians*.²⁸ It is still curious why none challenged the assumption that the man's own works, in the act of man's own salvation, would diminish the divinity of Jesus Christ. Can human behaviour—good or otherwise—be identical with the law? If so, then what is law? Is this perception of law an unresolved cultural conceptualization of freedom, which affected theological thinking? It is not the purpose of this thesis to move on this track; however this is an issue that a future speculative mind ought to engage.

3.3.3 The Ministerial Institute—A Pre-Session of the General Conference

For certain Adventist delegates, the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference was just another session of the General Conference. However, for those who took sides in the East–West controversy, this Conference inspired fear and uncertainty.

“Many had come to the Conference expecting a clash, and so were not disappointed. Such entered it in a fighting spirit, and a definite split developed. The gulf was wide and deep.”²⁹

Prior to the session of the General Conference, eight days (10–18 October 1888) were set aside for the ministerial institute. This institute was a Bible course meant to better equip the Adventist ministers with an understanding of Adventist doctrines, while also explaining the prophecies of the Bible. A. T. Jones commenced the course by challenging certain established, traditional Adventist explanations of Bible prophecy. Uriah Smith, the main proponent of these prophetic explanations, stood in defence of the old landmarks. According to R. W. Swartz, the Adventist author of the book *Light Bearers to the Remnant*,

²⁷ Published in 1886.

²⁸ Published in response, in 1888.

²⁹ LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 245.

Jones had done his homework well. No one was able effectively to dispute the historical evidence he cited... Uriah Smith, Adventism's most noted prophetic expositor, was placed on the defensive. On one occasion he modestly disclaimed originality for the list of kingdoms he had given in *Thoughts on Daniel* (one of his most representative books). Smith admitted having simply followed Millerite and earlier interpreters on this point.³⁰

The ministerial institute played a crucial role in helping the constituency understand the setting and different positions occupied both by the two young messengers, A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, and by the opposition represented by the majority of the leaders and delegates. By exposing the inconsistencies of Smith's position on prophetic interpretation, the institute also challenged the myth of a once-for-all interpretation, and set the stage for the RBF presentations at the General Conference.

3.3.4 Righteousness by Faith: the Hallmark of Minneapolis 1888

George I. Butler, president of the denomination, fell unexpectedly sick and was bedridden for the entire session of the General Conference. Even before the General Conference session started, J. H. Morrison, a close associate of Butler, displayed a blackboard on which he drew a dividing line and wrote: "Resolved That the Law in Galatians Is the Ceremonial Law," and signed his name underneath. On the other side he wrote: "Resolved—That the Law in Galatians Is the Moral Law," and asked E.J. Waggoner to sign his name there. Waggoner refused to enter into open conflict, and stated that he was there to present Bible evidence for his position. Waggoner dominated the scene of the Conference, and righteousness by faith dominated his presentations. E. G. White was deeply impressed by Waggoner's presentations, as she wrote later:

"When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard... every fibre of my heart said, Amen."³¹

What were the nature and content of Waggoner's presentations? Here are two positions in Adventist thought. L. H. Christian identifies Waggoner's message with the Protestant theology of the early and later reformers.

³⁰ R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1979), 187.

³¹ E. G. White, Ms 5, p. 10, Sermon, Rome, New York, June 19, 1889.

“Some may well ask, ‘what was this teaching of righteousness by faith which became the mainspring of the great Adventist revival, as taught and emphasized by Mrs. White and others?’ It was the same doctrine that Luther, Wesley, and many other servants of God had been teaching.”³²

The second position was represented by Robert Wieland and Donald Short, and this maintained that,

“the message of 1888 was neither a restatement of the doctrines of Luther and Wesley, nor a mere re-emphasis of the teaching of the Adventist pioneers; but that it was rather a more mature conception of the ‘everlasting gospel’ than had ever been perceived by any previous generation of human beings.”³³

One wonders what can be at the foundation of such an assumption?

“What true SDA would wish to be so muddled and confused in his thinking as to revive the idea that either Luther, Wesley, or any other of the ‘many servants of God’ of pre-1844 times preached the third angel’s message?³⁴ Such a view would inevitably rob us of any distinctive message to be presented to the world.”³⁵

There is no record of Waggoner’s presentations at Minneapolis as such, but his subsequent book, *Christ and His Righteousness*, is widely recognized by Adventist academics as reflecting the content of his multiple RBF expositions at the conference.

This book was based on hand notes taken by Jessie Waggoner, the author’s wife, as she stated in a letter she sent to LeRoy Froom.³⁶ Also, there are more than 1800 published pages of E. G. White’s correspondence, manuscripts, and sermons relating to the 1888 Conference in the four volumes of *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, in support of the idea that Waggoner’s Minneapolis presentations are being reflected in his book, *Christ and His Righteousness*.

In addition, 600 pages of letters, denominational records, press reports, R. Dewitt Hottel’s diary, Willie C. White’s notebook report, and other materials have been published under the title *Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis*. All of these materials corroborate Waggoner’s teaching at Minneapolis as reflected in his book *Christ and His Righteousness*.

³³ L.H. Christian, *Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts*, 239. The Minneapolis Conference and the Great Revival

³³ Robert Wieland and Donald Short, *1888 Re-Examined* (Leominster, MA: The Eusey Press, 1987), 450.

³⁴ This is a generic reference for the SDA theology and mission, and it is anchored on chapter 14 of the Book of Revelation.

³⁵ Wiland, Short, (chapter 5), Ibid.

³⁶ LeRoy Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 189.

The bottom line of all these documents and materials is that Waggoner's RBF presentations in synergy with his Christology became the hallmark of the 1888 General Conference Session of the SDA Church, and caused a chain reaction that ended in the adoption of Trinity. No other time did the Adventists abdicate from the height of his justification and from the identity of the Justifier as he presented Him at Minneapolis.

3.4 The Appeal and the Response—RBF and the 'Old View'

3.4.1 The Persistent Question

Did the delegates embrace Waggoner's new righteousness by faith message at the 1888 Minneapolis meeting? Or did the two-thirds and the majority of the delegates stay with the old view? In an attempt to answer this question, a letter written by A. T. Jones to C. E. Holmes dated 12 May 1921 states that,

"I can't now name anyone who accepted the truth [RBF] at that 1888 meeting, openly. But later many said they were greatly helped by it."

Why this reticence in accepting the light of RBF? Jones continues:

"One of the Battle Creek leaders [Uriah Smith],³⁷ said at that meeting after one of Dr. Waggoner's meetings: 'Now we could say amen to all of that if that is all there were to it. But away down yonder there is still *something* to come. And this is to lead us to that ... And if we say amen to this we will have to say amen to *that*, and then we are caught.'"³⁸

Nevertheless, the question still persists: Did the Adventists receive the 1888 RBF message in the end? The informed majority's overwhelming answer is "no!" But in giving this answer, a crucial element is overlooked and must be considered.

Soon after Minneapolis 1888, Adventists began accepting the full divinity of Christ, along with the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Later, following the same line of reasoning, the Seventh-day Adventist Church adopted the Trinity as a fundamental doctrine.

³⁷ Ron Duffield, *The Return of the Latter Rain*, (4th Angel, 2010), 118.

³⁸ A. T. Jones to C. E. Holmes, May 12, 1921

These historic facts must be considered in order to offer a mature answer to the question of whether the RBF message was received. Further, it is our hypothesis that these historic facts have substantially contributed to the quest for answering the question addressed at the beginning of this chapter.

Studies regarding the General Conference Session in Minneapolis frequently end with the content of the RBF message and the opposition toward the RBF doctrine as presented by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. However, in a biblical sense, the presentation and reception of a certain doctrine is not an end in itself, but means toward an end, which is the revealing, and consequently, the acceptance of Christ. E.G. White put it this way:

This *message* was to bring more prominently before the world the *uplifted Saviour*, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.³⁹

The Bible itself is under the same paradigm: “These are the very Scriptures that testify of Me.” (John 5:39) By debating justification, Jones and Waggoner inevitably opened a new front concerning the nature and Person of the Justifier.

The quality of justification depends on the nature and position of the Justifier, and as such Justification and the Justifier are inseparable. Although the overwhelming majority of the delegates at the Minneapolis General Conference rejected the justification message as it was presented by Waggoner and Jones, some delegates, later, openly and fully accepted the Justifier in His full divinity. The acceptance of the full divinity of Christ became a general theological phenomenon, and it was affirmed as the official position of SDA Church in Dallas, in 1980.

³⁹ E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 92. (Online edition, accessed, February 2, 2017, http://www.gilead.net/egw/books/misc/Testimonies_to_Ministers_and_Gospel_Workers/index.htm)

3.4.2 The ‘Prophet’ under Crossfire

Prior to the Minneapolis Conference, Ellen G. White was regarded by the majority of the people and leaders as “the prophetic voice,” and “the messenger of God.” Her writings were ‘the Spirit of Prophecy’ and ‘the testimonies of the Holy Spirit.’

However, these appellatives suddenly changed when Ellen G. White stood in defence of the new view of RBF, and in defence of E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones. The opposition, represented by G. Butler, U. Smith, and J. H. Morrison, tried to win over Ellen G. White by different means, but she stood unmoved in defence of the ‘uplifted Saviour.’ For her, ‘the message’ [RBF] was ‘from heaven’ and the messengers were ‘heaven sent,’ as the people were ‘like Mount Gilboa without rain or dew,’ and the message itself was the ‘latter rain’ for this dry land.

In their opposition to the ‘message’, Butler and Smith were taking the unthinkable position for that time and context: they were willing to sacrifice Ellen G. White as a ‘prophet’ and ‘messenger from God’ in reaction to her support for the ‘new view’. Despite the fact that she lost the support of the main leaders, she still vigorously impacted and supported Minneapolis and the ‘messengers’ with their ‘heaven sent message’. Another question that has yet to be answered is—did Minneapolis have an impact on Ellen G White also, particularly with regard to her views of the Godhead?

3.5 In the Aftermath of Minneapolis—W.W. Prescott, A. G. Daniells, and E.G. White

3.5.1 The Minneapolis Syndrome

Following the conclusion of the Minneapolis General Conference, the participants carried with them (and perhaps shared) their images of the conference: both negative and positive. The echo of their report continues to be felt through the worldwide Adventist church to this day, but in reverse.

While at Minneapolis the majority of the delegates were in opposition, and only a very small minority was supportive, today the opposite is true. No other event in the Adventist history challenged the church, and put her to study and debate like Minneapolis General Conference did.⁴⁰

3.5.2 The Vanguard

Although George Butler and Uriah Smith, the fierce defenders of the old view, recognized in RBF theory presentation as being ‘nothing new’ because they viewed themselves as historic supporters of the same, still they called Waggoner’s position ‘new’. They were right. While the RBF theory was not at the first presentation at Minneapolis, never before in the Adventist history was it presented at that qualitative level. Also, never before was Jesus Christ presented in such terms as those used at Minneapolis by the two messengers. That was a new dogmatic chapter that opened in the history of SDA Church. As experienced long time leaders, they most likely anticipated the powerful impact of Waggoner’s presentation on various influential minds, and on the identity of the denomination as a whole. Their fears were justified and realized yet again.

As historically evident, the entire Adventist Church experienced a process of doctrinal transformation from its initial Arian view to its later Trinitarian view of the Godhead. This transformation affected both groups of post-Minneapolis Adventists. The difference between the two groups is that soon after Minneapolis, those who accepted the new RBF message have quickly embraced the Trinitarian view of the Godhead, and actively became agents for changing the entire non-Trinitarian Adventist denomination.

In support of this position, three individuals presented below are pure examples of such agents who experienced this transformation after Minneapolis.

⁴⁰ In my forty years of ministry within the ranks of the SDA Church I witnessed both the great Godhead shift and the present development of a fully Christocentric evangelistic ministry and I trace their origin in the troubled times of Minneapolis 1888 General Conference.

3.5.3 Professor W. W. Prescott

The influential Professor W. W. Prescott was a living proof of the impact of Minneapolis. As Gilbert Valentine wrote,

“Professor Prescott’s theological emphasis had changed radically since 1888. Events following Minneapolis had led him into a new religious experience that centred on a ‘personal relationship with Christ’. As a result, he came to see the whole range of church doctrines from a quite different perspective. As he explained to delegates at the 1919 Bible Conference years later, the change had come to him ‘almost like a personal revelation, like a person speaking to me.’ When he first ‘started out’ in the work in the early 1880s, he had thought that ‘the thing to do was to prove the doctrines. . . . as I had observed and heard.’ The preacher’s task was ‘simply to demonstrate the truthfulness of church teachings through careful argumentative use of proof-texts.’ Following his ‘new vision’ however, he had ‘cast the whole thing aside and started in the simplest way presenting Christ.’ Church doctrines, he now believed, should be presented, as ‘simply the gospel of Christ rightly understood.’ They should ‘grow out of a belief in Jesus Christ as a living personal Saviour.’”⁴¹

In 1895 Professor W.W. Prescott was in the Melbourne area of Australia, where he conducted an evangelistic campaign of great significance for the development of SDA theology. This campaign appears to have been new and unprecedented in Adventist history—a fully Christ-centred evangelistic campaign with a fully divine Christ. As Gilbert Valentine clarifies, not long before this memorable campaign,

“Prescott visited a second-hand bookstore shortly after first landing in Sydney in August and bought himself a copy of Augustus Neander’s classic, *Lectures on the History of Christian Dogmas*. The book, now in Andrews University Library, is extensively underlined by Prescott’s editorial blue pencil. The chapters marked are those that deal with the Christological controversies of the early centuries. Prescott had been rigorously trained in Greek and Latin in the United States (Dartmouth) and he now became interested at least to see how the church had, in the development of the historic church statements about Christ, grappled with problems of appropriate language in the expression of complex ideas. In spite of the strong anti-creedal stance of many in the church, he was at least prepared to consider what the creeds had to say. The professor studied intently the specific issues of Arianism, the deity of Christ, and the Trinity.”⁴²

It is obvious that Prescott went beyond Minneapolis in his labour to uplift the divinity of Jesus Christ. Neander’s classic, *Lectures on the Christian Dogmas*, shows both Prescott’s enthusiasm and satisfaction for the full divinity of Christ. He won many hearts for the fully divine Christ at that time.

Among them was a person of high significance for the future of Adventism, A. G. Daniels, who were to become the future president of the Adventist denomination.

⁴¹ Gilbert Valentine, ‘How Clear View of Jesus Developed in the Adventist Church’ *Ministry Magazine* Vol. 77, No. 5/May (2005): 14.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19.

3.5.4 A. G. Daniels

Arthur G. Daniels was deeply impressed with Prescott's fully Christocentric evangelism and became an enthusiastic 'convert' to the 'new view'

"'Preaching Jesus as Professor Prescott has done,' added local conference president Arthur G. Daniells, 'seems to have completely disarmed the people of [their] prejudice' [against the Adventists]. He felt that the public image of Adventists had been 'completely revolutionized.' But it was more than just the public image of Adventism that had been changed. Adventism itself was changing. The Armadale meetings with their demands for clearer public witness to educated, informed people helped lead to profound shifts in Adventist thinking and understanding on Christology. A. G. Daniels, president of the world church, was a *convert* to the new perspective. It was as if someone had switched the lights on for him. Under Prescott's mentorship he became a new person. His evangelistic preaching took on new power as he used the same paradigm for *teaching the doctrines* in his next series of meetings conducted after Prescott left. A quiet revolution was underway. It took a long time, however, before many others caught the same vision."⁴³

Both Prescott and Daniels were fundamentally changing the nature of preaching in the Adventist Church. Christ was not to be used as a means to prove the doctrines of the Church, but became the central point of the preaching and doctrines, and the teachings of the Church were just a means toward this end. Not only was Daniels won for the new view of Christ, but he also went even a step further and dedicated time and energy to the study of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, and shared his findings with the ministerial personnel.

"Daniels, who spoke at the evening meetings, chose to speak on the theme of the Holy Spirit. Following the Armadale camp meeting [with W. W. Prescott] and prior to the Cooranbong institute, the ministers in Melbourne, under Daniels' leadership, had followed up the interest stimulated by Prescott and had been studying the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in their daily workers' meeting. Daniels had also perused the second-hand bookstores and found Andrew Murray's *The Spirit of Christ*. He found the book helpful in nurturing his own personal devotional life and used it as a guide for the workers' study of Scripture on the topic."⁴⁴

Despite their progress in their views of Christ and the Holy Spirit, both Prescott and Daniels were still struggling for a clearer view of the Godhead. Along with them, and from the same side of Minneapolis, Ellen G. White was preparing to make her contribution for a more profound understanding of the Godhead.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

3.5.5 E. G. White

Ellen White undoubtedly exerted a significant impact on the Minneapolis General Conference. Many have affirmed this, but very little has been said about the impact Minneapolis had on her life and ministry. Her post-Minneapolis performance indicates that she was not just a supporter, but a militant of Minneapolis. Her influence and impact is greater than what it is usually understood. Seen from a Minneapolis and a post Minneapolis perspective one can easily observe that the writings she produced between 1868 and 1883 had the potential to be the conditioner toward the historic moment of this now famous General Conference. She not only ante-dated Waggoner and Jones in their messages in the area of the divinity of Christ but, based on her status—as the prophetic voice in the church—she exercised a strong influence in preparing the people for those messages. Minneapolis was not a surprise for her; it was just a powerful confirmation. A move in her writing took place years before Minneapolis, and it can be credited with a “John the Baptist” type of work toward renewal and change in Adventism. This aspect is well depicted by Jerry Moon, as he affirms that Ellen G. White’s

“writings about the Godhead show a clear progression not primarily from anti- to pro-Trinitarianism, but from relative ambiguity to greater specificity.”⁴⁵

Max Hatton however disagreed with this view about Ellen G. White, as he made this clear in a paper titled, “Excuse me, but I have a very Worrisome Problem!” As a pastor and theologian, Hatton was convinced that ‘based on evidence’, Ellen G. White went from a “Semi-Arian to a Trinitarian understanding of the Godhead.” The bottom line of these two positions, as antagonistic as they are, is that she moved in her theology *toward* a Trinitarian view of the Godhead. Over 1800 pages of her *1888 Materials* repeatedly attest to this fact. She became the first to affirm a fully Trinitarian view of Christ on the background of a yet Arian and Semi-Arian Adventist Church.

⁴⁵ Jerry Moon, ‘The Adventist Trinity Debate, Part 2: The Role of Ellen G. White’ *Andrews Seminary Studies*, No. 2 Autumn (2003): 275–292.

“In Christ was life, original, unborrowed, underived. ‘He that has the Son has life’ (1 John 5:12). The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life.”⁴⁶

A phrase such as the one above was usually enough to convince and transform M. L. Andreasen,⁴⁷ and many others like him from non-Trinitarians to Trinitarians. For Andreasen, the power of this phrase derived from the prophetic aura he attributed to Ellen G. White’s work and writings, and from her integrity as a minister of the Word. As a convert to the Trinity doctrine, he became one of the earliest heralds of Trinitarian Adventism.

3.6 Post-1888 Trinitarian Statements

As far as Trinity is concerned, the decisions and changes made during the 1980 General Conference in Dallas was the product of a long journey; a journey highlighted by the following signposts.

The first Adventist statement of belief was produced by Uriah Smith in 1872.⁴⁸ In a clear and simple manner He stated, in the first two articles, what he considered the ‘entire unanimity throughout the body’ (the SDA Church)

- I. “That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. (Ps. 139:7)
- II. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things, and by whom they do consist; that he took on him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that he dwelt among men full of grace and truth, lived our example, died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in heaven, where, with his own blood he makes atonement for our sins.”⁴⁹

It appears that this statement of belief was satisfactory for different theological currents in the church and for the non-Adventist critique.

⁴⁶ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 530. Gilbert Valentine writes the following words about this famous quote: ‘The frequently quoted statement from *The Desire of Ages* is a loose paraphrase of a sentence from John Cuming, *Sabbath Evening Readings on the New Testament: St. John* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Company, 1857), 6.

⁴⁷ M. L. Andreasen (1876–1962) was a leading Adventist theologian, administrator and educator.

⁴⁸ Uriah Smith, *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA Publishing Association, 1872), 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The second statement was, in essence, a reproduction of the first one which remained unchanged until 1889, when the same Uriah Smith was commissioned to draft an updated version of this statement. After affirming Bible as the only creed, corrections and revisions were done, but the first articles of faith concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit remained almost untouched. The first article of faith from 1872 was just transferred unaltered from the first into the second statement, and the second one had only minor linguistic changes such as the word God was replaced by 'He'.

The third statement of fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-Day Adventists was drafted in 1931 and was the work of a committee and written by F. M. Wilcox, the then Editor in chief of *Review and Herald*, one of the most important publications of the SDA Church. It was borne in response to a request coming from Africa. Missionaries and the officials of the SDA Church needed something representative of their belief to submit to the authorities where they were activating. At Section II, the statement reads in the following way:

"That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption. (Matt. 28:19)."

In section II there is a clear affirmation of the full divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ The statement remained unchanged until 1946 when the General Conference officially endorsed it.

"This marked the first official endorsement of a trinitarian view by the church,"⁵¹

The fourth statement was produced at the 1980 General Conference, when the doctrine of Trinity was declared the official doctrine of the SDA Church. This was the

⁵⁰ "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists", *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book* (Takoma Park, Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1931), 377–380.

⁵¹ Moon, *Ibid.*

second time the General Conference stood for the doctrine of Trinity as representing the belief of the SDA Church.

3.7 Conclusions

In concluding this chapter, it is important to point out that the findings presented here, which continued the historical analysis of the Christological debates delineated by the previous chapter, indicated that the religious background of the new converts (who were former Trinitarian Christians), paved the way toward the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology. The Righteous by Faith Conference held in Minneapolis in 1888, particularly the Trinitarian impulses that surfaced during the Conference and in its aftermath, illustrated how the 1888 events represented the peak of the dogmatic tensions between Arianism and Trinitarianism, and spearheaded the later adoption of Trinitarian doctrine. In analyzing the key information on the main ingredients of the debates, in surveying the theological background of the pioneers of Adventism along with the official Christology of the time, the anti-creedal stance of Adventism, and the state of the Church, I did so in order to highlight how new ideas affected and changed the beliefs of the main actors of Adventism. We underscored the powerful influence of Ellen G. White as a shadow negotiator of Trinitarian Christology. I also illustrated the aftershocks of the “Minneapolis syndrome” and the role played by W.W. Prescott, A. G. Daniels, and E. G. White, which led to the post-1888 statements of adoption of the Trinitarian doctrine. Toward the end of this chapter I introduced Ellet J. Waggoner and his work on Christology, with the intent to explore further in the remaining chapters of this thesis, and also introduce it as a new step (perhaps opportunity) for a meaningful conversation with Eastern Christianity. It is perhaps the beginning of a new journey that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is encouraged to take in a more or less charted territory.

Chapter 4

The Adventist ‘Justifier-Justification by Faith’ Synergy with a Special Emphasis on the Contribution of Dr. E. J. Waggoner and his potential for Christological Dialogue with Eastern Christianity

For purpose of clarity, the Seventh-day Adventist Church subscribes to the sola fide doctrine of salvation. As such, apart from divine grace, faith is the sole component of salvation, and not the acts. At the same time, the SDA focus on philanthropy is to be understood not as a condition for salvation, but as a consequence derived from faith. Therefore, faith becomes the leverage of acts. The Orthodox Church—which is the subject of our comparison—often misunderstands this relationship between faith and works; considering that the Seventh-day Adventist Church discards the significance of acts on the presupposition that one can be saved through faith irrespective of one’s immoral behavior. In reality, an immoral behavior is nothing but the most convincing manifestation of the lack of faith; thus the argument becoming self-cancelling.

Organized in three parts, the chapter will first introduce the general Christological doctrine developed by Dr. Ellet J Waggoner in the aftermath of 1888 conference.

In the second part, the chapter will define and explain my interpretation of E. J. Waggoner’s logic of Justifier–Justification by Faith, and the role of faith backed by works that derive from it. In doing so, I will explain this logic through theological analogies between Waggoner’s Christology and Eastern Christian dogmatics.

The third part of the chapter will provide the supporting data on Trinitarian Christology for the purpose of highlighting the prospects for Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity, by exploring the concepts of freedom, evil, sin, punishment justification and salvation from a comparative theological perspective. This analysis

will be conducted from a biblical perspective, and in support of the doctrine of Trinity, which demonstrates that Jesus Christ is God Himself.

In conclusion, I hope to demonstrate that Waggoner's adoption of the Trinitarian doctrine along with the abandonment of Arianism or semi-Arianism of SDA emerged from his reading and interpretation of the scripture, through a logic that was highly similar to the Eastern Orthodox thinking, yet without being influenced by it.

4.1 Preliminary interpretations of E. J. Waggoner's Christology: Trinitarian, Arian? Semi-Arian?

Prior to Minneapolis 1888, Ellet J. Waggoner believed and taught that our need for Christ in the process of salvation has two phases: first, to justify the sins of our past (where we have no control whatsoever), and second, to provide us with the grace that will enable us to build salvable characters.

In 1874, Waggoner wrote the following text that gives a glimpse of understanding over his initial view of Christology:

“As all have violated God's law and cannot of themselves render obedience to His just requirements, we are dependent on Christ, first for justification from our past offences, and, secondly, for grace whereby to render acceptable obedience to His holy law in time to come.”¹

4.1.1 Waggoner: the Trinitarian

Later, at Minneapolis, he went a step further in his theological journey, though he was not totally free of 'works', and clarified that only Christ's imputed righteousness can save us. Man and his product, as part of the salvation process, were totally excluded.

“But since there is none other name under heaven except that of Christ whereby we can be saved, it follows that to depend on anything except Christ for justification is a rejection of Christ.”²

¹ Ellet J. Waggoner, “Fundamental Principles,” *Signs of the Times Magazine*, June 4 (1874): 1.

² Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians, A Review* (Oakland CA: Pacific Press, 1888), 9.

Not only is Christ the only One to depend upon, but depending on something or someone else for salvation means betraying Him. Seeing justification in this light, and specially, understanding that there is no human contribution or merit toward his own salvation, Waggoner felt the need for a Justifier of the highest nature and position.

“Note the expression, ‘the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.’ He has His abode there, and He is there as a part of the Godhead, as surely when on earth as when in heaven. The use of the present tense implies continued existence.”³

It was in this sense that Waggoner felt the need (and perhaps the urge) to uplift Christ; something he did at Minneapolis.

“This ‘lifting up’ of Jesus, while it has primary reference to His crucifixion, embraces more than the mere historical fact; it means that Christ must be ‘lifted up’ by all who believe in Him, as the crucified Redeemer, whose grace and glory are sufficient to supply the world's greatest need; it means that He should be “lifted up” in all His exceeding loveliness and power as ‘God with us,’ that His Divine attractiveness may thus draw all unto Him. See John 12:32.”⁴

For Waggoner, Christ was “all the fullness of the Godhead,” “the very substance of God,” “having life in Himself,” “called Jehovah, the Self-Existent One.”⁵ He was the Mediator of both the New and the Old Testament. Sin was always forgiven in the same way and salvation always came from Christ. Otherwise,

“it would show that God's ways are not equal, and that in different ages of the world He has different ways of saving men; and still worse, the holding of such a view dishonours Christ by virtually denying that in all things He has the pre-eminence.”⁶

In Waggoner's theology, Christ comes to full equality with God the Father, a kind of equality that is not of a Unitarian or Modalist type.

“Indeed, the fact that Christ is a part of the Godhead possessing all the attributes of Divinity, being the *equal* of the Father in all respects, as Creator and Lawgiver, is the only force in the atonement. It is this alone that makes redemption a possibility. Christ died ‘that He might bring us to God’ (1 Peter 3:18), but if He lacked one iota of being *equal* to God, He could not bring us to Him. Divinity means having the attributes of Deity. If Christ were not divine, then we should have only a human sacrifice. It matters not, even if be granted that Christ was the highest created intelligence in the Universe; in this case he would be a subject, owing allegiance to the Law, without the ability to do more than his own duty. He could have no righteousness to impart to others. There is an infinite distance between the highest angel ever created and God; therefore, the highest angel could not lift fallen man up and make it partaker of the Divine nature. Angels can minister; God only can redeem.

³ See chapter ‘Is Christ God?’ in Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ our Righteousness* (London: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1892).

⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 1.1

⁵ Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Melbourne: Echo Publishing, 1892), 23.

⁶ E. J. Waggoner, “Did the Patriarchs Know Christ?” *The Signs of the Times* December 30 (1886): 790.

Thanks be to God that we are saved ‘through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,’ in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and who is, therefore, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”⁷

Was the exalting of Christ to overshadow the glory of God? Not in Ellet J.

Waggoner’s theology. This is because, as he writes,

“the Father is not relegated to a secondary position, as some imagine, when Christ is exalted as Creator and Lawgiver, for the glory of the Father shines through the Son. Since God is known only through Christ, it is evident that the Father cannot be honoured as He ought to be honoured, by those that do not exalt Christ. As Christ Himself said, “He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him.”⁸

What would Waggoner’s response be to the Arian accusation that worshipping and honouring Christ would mean blasphemy, or would mean worshiping the creation instead of the Creator?

“Let no one, therefore, who honours Christ at all, give Him less honour than he gives the Father, for this would be to dishonour the Father by just so much; but let all, with the angels in heaven worship the Son, having no fear that they are worshipping and serving the creature instead of the Creator.”⁹

Furthermore, for Waggoner, the Savior was sinless and even more glorified because He bore the sins of humanity:

“Christ was sinless; the law was in His heart. As the Son of God His life was worth more than those of all created beings, whether in heaven or on earth. . . . He took upon Himself our nature, Heb. 2:16,17; and on Him was laid ‘the iniquity of us all’ Isa. 53:6. In order to save us, He had to come where we were, or, in other words, He had to take the position of a lost sinner. . . . And because Christ was ‘numbered with the transgressors,’ He suffered the penalty of transgression. But the suffering of Christ was not on His own account. ‘He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.’” Pet. 2:22.¹⁰

Judging by these accounts,, one might easily ask: did Waggoner intend to develop a Trinitarian theology? Based on the evidence we have, the answer is negative, at least not consciously. However, despite the evidence found in Waggoner’s writing, LeRoy Froom, an early Adventist historian, introduces Waggoner as a Trinitarian theologian:

“The first six sections [of Waggoner’s book *Christ Our Righteousness*] deal with the *transcendent nature and all-encompassing Deity of Christ*. As stated, to establish this foundational truth was Waggoner’s first concern. He felt impelled to take note of certain false concepts, as well as to present the truth of Christ’s complete Deity and eternal place in

⁷ Ibid., 43–44.

⁸ Waggoner, *Christ our*, 44–45.

⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰ E. J. Waggoner, “Condemned and Justified,” *The Signs of the Times*, Vol. 10, No. 26, July 3 (1884): 409.

the Godhead, or Trinity, and [of] His infinite attributes and prerogatives—so as really to comprehend the Christ whose righteousness we are to seek and to receive.”¹¹

As he continues his argumentation for a “Trinitarian” Waggoner, Froom contends that:

“Waggoner expressly declares that Christ is *part of the Godhead*—the Second Person of the Trinity. He is set forth as the *equal of the Father* in all respects, not lacking *one iota* of equality with Him.” (emphasis in Froom).¹²

Waggoner “thus recognized the component First, Second, and Third Persons as coequal and consubstantial—in direct conflict with the contrary contentions of Aryanism, which, in the early portion of his presentation, he was effectively confuting.”¹³

4.1.2 Waggoner: The Arian

Contrary to Froom’s assessment, David Clayton¹⁴ (and not only him) strongly disagrees with Froom’s view of Waggoner as Trinitarian. As Clayton writes,

“He [LeRoy Froom] also claims that Waggoner believed that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were *consubstantial*! To say that Waggoner believed in a Trinity is bad enough, but to say he believed they were consubstantial¹⁵ is saying that he believed in the Catholic Trinity, and this is an even bigger lie than the first one.”¹⁶

It was from the study of the writings of Waggoner that David Clayton stated that Waggoner’s Christ was neither the ‘Catholic Christ’ nor the later ‘Trinitarian Adventist’s Christ’. Concerning the position of Christ in the Godhead, Waggoner wrote not only about the place of Christ in the Godhead, but also about the very nature of Christ Himself. For Waggoner, Christ was not God because He *was* God [Catholic position], but because He *became* God, not in the manner of the Adoptionist’s view, but by His very ‘origin’. He ‘became’ God by being ‘begotten’, absolutely uniquely, above all creation, but still ‘becoming’ and not just ‘being.’ Here, the evidence doesn’t allow

¹¹ LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), 192

¹² Ibid., 274.

¹³ Ibid., 279.

¹⁴ President, ‘Smyrna Gospel Ministry’, Welch, WV, USA.

¹⁵ Waggoner indeed used this very word: “He is of the very substance and nature of God and possesses by birth all the attributes of God, for the Father was pleased that His Son should be the express image of His Person, the brightness of His glory, and filled with all the fullness of the Godhead.” -Waggoner, Did the Patriarchs Know Christ?” *Signs of the Times Magazine*, December 30 (1886):790.

¹⁶ David Clayton, *The Return of the Fourth Angel* (Welch, WV: Smyrna Ministries, 1888), 12.

Clayton to believe Froom's assumption that Waggoner was a Trinitarian, or that he was working toward Trinitarianism.

4.1.3 Waggoner: the Semi-Arian

I contend that Waggoner was neither an Arian nor a Trinitarian. He was rather a suspected semi-Arian, as Waggoner appeared to testify himself:

All things proceed ultimately from God, the Father; even Christ Himself proceeded and came forth from the Father, but it pleased the Father that in Him should dwell, and He should be the direct, immediate Agent in every act of creation.¹⁷

However, in order to prevent any misunderstanding about the nature of Christ, Waggoner wrote explicitly:

Neither should we imagine that Christ is a creature, because Paul calls Him (Col. 1:15) 'The First-born of every creature,' for the very next verses show Him to be Creator and not a creature. 'For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.' Now if He created everything that was ever created and existed before all created things, it is evident that He Himself is not among created things. He is above all creation and not a part of it.¹⁸

Yet, in Waggoner's view, Christ has an 'origin' both in time (He has a beginning), and in 'substance' (He was derived from the Father). However, Waggoner believes that Christ's 'origin' (from the 'substance' of the Father), far from degrading Him and making Him a 'lesser' God—makes Him a true God from the true God.

We know that Christ 'proceeded forth and came from God' (John 8:42), but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man.¹⁹

He is of the very substance and nature of God and possesses *by birth* all the attributes of God, for the Father was pleased that His Son should be the express image of His Person, the brightness of His glory, and filled with all the fullness of the Godhead.²⁰

Due to the unresolved antinomy between the concepts of 'eternity' and 'beginning', Waggoner's words try to cover the 'beginning' of Christ with a veil of eternity, as he apparently infers the existence of 'a time when Christ was not.' Is there,

¹⁷ Ibid, 19.

¹⁸ Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Clarksville, AR: Pathway Publishers, 1978), 21.

¹⁹ Waggoner, chapter 'How shall we consider Christ', Ibid.

²⁰ Waggoner, chapter 'Is Christ a Created Being?', Ibid.

in this view of Christ, any danger of belittling Christ? Yes, but Waggoner attempts to compensate for Christ's 'origin' in time with the 'origin' of his life.

"A son also is, to a greater or less degree, a reproduction of the father; he has to some extent the features and personal characteristics of his father; not perfectly because there is no perfect reproduction among mankind. But there is no imperfection in God [reproduction] or in any of His works and so, Christ is the 'express image' of the Father's Person (Heb 1:3). As the Son of the self-existent God, He has by nature all the attributes of Deity' (pp. 11-12) [. . .] Christ is the 'only begotten Son of God.' And therefore the Son of God in a sense in which no other being ever was or ever can be. The angels are sons of God as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38.), by creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14-15), but Christ is the Son of God by birth. The writer to the Hebrews further shows that the position of the Son of God is not one in which Christ has been elevated, but that is one which He has by right."²¹

Considering this evidence on how Waggoner's Christology was perceived, Froom's words about a 'Trinitarian' Waggoner are anachronous. Froom reads into Minneapolis the later development of Adventist theology, and imputes words and concepts of a later time to Waggoner. Should this be the case, than one could not but ask the question: How much of the later development of Adventist theology is indebted to Waggoner's Christology, and what was the impact of the response from Minneapolis to his RBF presentation?

4.2 My view on Waggoner's Logic of Justifier–Justification by Faith

The following pages present my findings on Waggoner's Christology which led him to the adoption of Trinitarianism.

4.2.1 The Logic Itself

Based on the eternal principle of the Initiative of God (as derived from the Protoevangelium), for Waggoner it became obvious that it is not the nature of justification that asks for a certain level of Justifier, but the other way around: The level, the quality, the nature and the status in Godhead of the Justifier sets the level and the course of Justification. E. J. Waggoner's interplay between the Justifier (J) and Justification by Faith (JBF) is anchored in the conditional relationship between *sola fide* (through faith alone) and *sola*

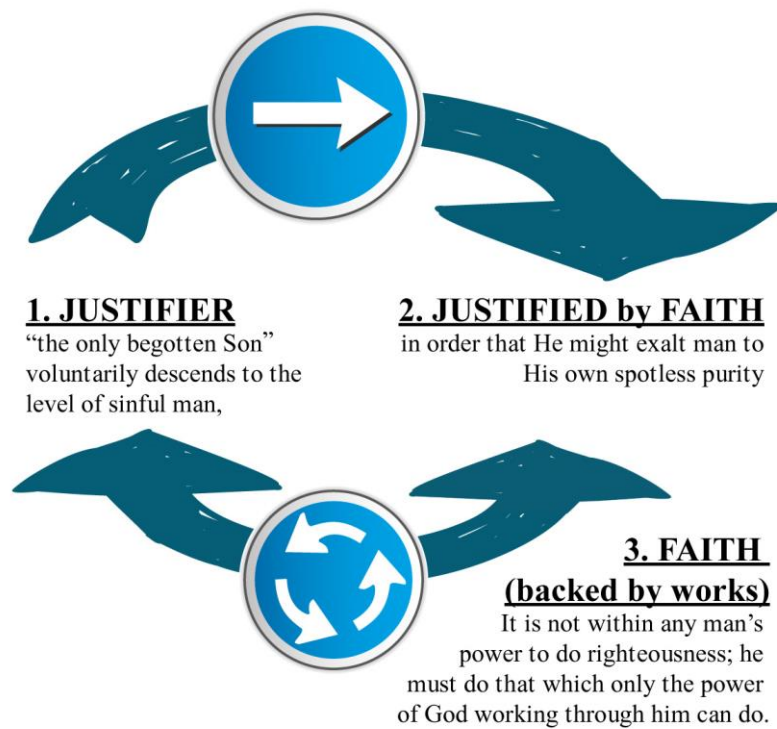
²¹ Ibid., 12–13.
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gratia (through God's favour or through grace alone). In stating his logic on the relationship between the Justifier and Justification by Faith, Waggoner rightly contends that God's *gratia* (grace) precedes *and is* a condition for man's salvation, by contrast with *sola fide*, which contends that it is faith alone that brings salvation. While faith represents an essential condition for salvation, it is neither the sole condition, nor does it play a *primum movens* (first mover, or primary cause) role in triggering the process of salvation. Therefore, in Waggoner's Christology, *sola gratia* appears to supersede and to become a condition for *sola fide*, and not vice-versa. As illustrated by the diagram below, the process begins with the Justifier, or "our blessed Saviour, who Himself voluntarily descended to the level of sinful man, in order that He might exalt man to His own spotless purity."²² Once this part of the process is accomplished, according to Waggoner, it is the working together between God's grace and human faith that continues the process to ensure the achievement of salvation and everlasting life. However, the act of faith along with the works that derive from faith remain conditioned by the divine grace, since is not exclusively "within any man's power to do righteousness, even though he wants to (Gal. 5:17)," because, as Waggoner clarifies, man "must do that which only the power of God working through him can do. It is impossible for a man to walk on water, yet Peter did it when he exercised faith in Jesus."²³

Therefore, the work of salvation begins with Jesus, continues with man's faith (and works that derive from faith), and ends in Jesus simply because Jesus is both the cause and the solution; that is "the Alpha and the Omega" of the entire creation. (Revelation 1:8) As such, Jesus is the archetype, and the telos of faith. "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." (Ps. 27:8)

²² Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 28.

²³ *Ibid.*, 96.



WAGGONER’S JUSTIFIER—JUSTIFIED BY FAITH LOGIC ||| © 2017 Nicu Butoiu

4.2.2 Biblical Proof for the Logic

Anchored in the Scripture, Waggoner’s logic of Justifier—Justification by Faith is encrypted in the following statement:

“The object of Christ in coming to earth was to reveal God to men, so that they might come to Him. Thus the apostle Paul says that ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself’ (2 Cor. 5:19); and in John we read that the Word, which was God, was ‘made flesh.’ John 1:1:14. In the same connection it is stated, ‘No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him’ (or made Him known). John 1:18. Note the expression, ‘the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.’ He has His abode there, and He is there as a part of the Godhead, as surely when on earth as when in heaven. The use of the present tense implies continued existence. It presents the same idea that is contained in the statement of Jesus to the Jews (John 8:58), ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’ And this again shows His identity with the One who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, who declared His name to be ‘I AM THAT I AM.’”²⁴

As a medical doctor, Waggoner’s scientific background made him prone to probing abstract concepts through the logic of causality. He applies both synthetic and analytic reasoning, which he combines with emotional engagement through contemplation. As he continues to clarify his logic in the context of interpreting Col. 1:15–17, he recommends that,

²⁴ Ibid., 15.
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“This wonderful text should be carefully studied and often contemplated. It leaves not a thing in the universe that Christ did not create. He made everything in heaven, and everything on earth; He made everything that can be seen, and everything that cannot be seen; the thrones and dominions, and the principalities and the powers in heaven, all depend upon Him for existence. And as He is before all things, and their Creator, so by Him do all things consist or hold together. This is equivalent to what is said in Heb. 1:3, that He upholds all things by the word of His power. It was by a word that the heavens were made; and that same word holds them in their place, and preserves them from destruction.”²⁵

That this logic was not an occasional instance of biblical reflection is demonstrated by the fact that Waggoner had restated his position in various contexts, predominantly in contexts when he extrapolates upon God’s manifestation in flesh:

“On the contrary, we are simply exalting the ‘Divine power’ of our blessed Saviour, who Himself voluntarily descended to the level of sinful man, in order that He might exalt man to His own spotless purity, which He retained under the most adverse circumstances. His humanity only veiled His Divine nature, by which He was inseparably connected with the invisible God, and which was more than able successfully to resist the weaknesses of the flesh. There was in His whole life a struggle. The flesh, moved upon by the enemy of all righteousness, would tend to sin, yet His Divine nature never for a moment harbored an evil desire, nor did His Divine power for a moment waver. Having suffered in the flesh all that men can possibly suffer, He returned to the throne of the Father as spotless as when He left the courts of glory. When He lay in the tomb, under the power of death, ‘it was impossible that He should be holden of it,’ because He ‘knew no sin.’”²⁶

As a process, the direction of justification from the Justifier towards man’s Justification by Faith is clearly explained by Waggoner in the text below:

“Who could ask for more? Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, may dwell in our hearts so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. What a wonderful promise! He is ‘touched with the feeling of our infirmity.’ That is, having suffered all that sinful flesh is heir to, He knows all about it, and so closely does He identify Himself with His children that whatever presses upon them makes a like impression upon Him, and He knows how much Divine power is necessary to resist it; and if we but sincerely desire to deny ‘ungodliness and worldly lusts,’ He is able and anxious to give to us strength ‘exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.’ All the power which Christ had dwelling in Him by nature, we may have dwelling in us by grace, for He freely bestows it upon us.”²⁷

4.2.3 The Paradigm of Law and its Abolition by the Lawmaker

A further argument built to strengthen not only his logic, but also the recognition of the full divinity of Jesus Christ is the paradigm of the Law–and–Lawgiver relationship. In the Western culture, it was understood that a law can only be repealed by the same authority which issued that law, or by another authority of an equal or higher status—

²⁵ Ibid., 17.

²⁶ Ibid., 28–29.

²⁷ Ibid., 29–30.

never by someone of lower status.²⁸ Therefore, concerning the enforcement and the abolition of law by the lawmaker, Waggoner has to say the following:

“Let the reader try to picture the scene. Here stands the law as the swift witness against the sinner. It cannot change, and it will not call a sinner a righteous man. The convicted sinner tries again and again to obtain righteousness from the law, but it resists all his advances. It cannot be bribed by any amount of penance or professedly good deeds. But here stands Christ, “full of grace” as well as of truth, calling the sinner to Him. At last the sinner, weary of the vain struggle to get righteousness from the law, listens to the voice of Christ, and flees to His outstretched arms. Hiding in Christ, he is covered with His righteousness; and now behold! he has obtained, through faith in Christ, that for which he has been vainly striving. He has the righteousness which the law requires, and it is the genuine article, because he obtained it from the Source of Righteousness; from the very place whence the law came.”²⁹

Christ’s authority as a Judge emerges from His divinity; and as such the prerogative of judgeship can only be applied to the Lawmaker; that is God Himself.

“To Christ is committed the highest prerogative, that of judging. He must receive the same honor that is due to God, and for the reason that He is God. The beloved disciple bears this witness: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ John 1:1. That this Divine Word is none other than Jesus Christ is shown by verse 14: ‘And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.’”³⁰

To conclude this argument, Waggoner explains that Christ has a triple divine role, lawgiver, judge and justifier—and, as such, is in full position of authority to grant salvation to humanity.

“He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness; for God is judge Himself.” Ps. 50:1-6. That this passage has reference to Christ may be known (1) by the fact already learned, that all judgment is committed to the Son; and (2) by the fact that it is at the second coming of Christ that He sends His angels to gather together His elect from the four winds. Matt. 24:31.”³¹

4.2.4 The Argument of Christ’s Eternity

To strengthen his logic, Waggoner appeals also to the argument of Christ’s eternity. Therefore, Christ’s eternity and co-substantiality with the Father is acknowledged by virtue of Christ being the Son with the authority of being Justifier, just as revealed in the Scripture:

“This name was not given to Christ in consequence of some great achievement, but it is His by right of inheritance. Speaking of the power and greatness of Christ, the writer to

²⁸ Gerald R. Thompson, *The Right to Alter or Abolish the Government: God Makes Nations, Men Make Governments* (Livonia, MI: Lonang Institute: 2014), 12–13. Last accessed March 29, 2018, <https://lonang.com/commentaries/foundation/right-to-alter-or-abolish-government/>

²⁹ Ibid., 62.

³⁰ Ibid., 8–9.

³¹ Ibid., 10.

the Hebrews says that He is made so much better than the angels, because ‘He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.’ Heb. 1:4. A son always rightfully takes the name of the father; and Christ, as ‘the only begotten Son of God,’ has rightfully the same name. A son, also, is, to a greater or less degree, a reproduction of the father; he has, to some extent, the features and personal characteristics of his father; not perfectly, because there is no perfect reproduction among mankind. But there is no imperfection in God, or in any of His works; and so Christ is the ‘express image’ of the Father’s person. Heb. 1:3. As the Son of the self-existent God, He has by nature all the attributes of Deity.”³²

As Waggoner specifies later in his argument,

“The angels are sons of God, as was Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38), by creation; Christians are the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 15); but Christ is the Son of God by birth. The writer to the Hebrews further shows that the position of the Son of God is not one to which Christ has been elevated, but that it is one which He has by right. He says that Moses was faithful in all the house of God, as a servant, ‘but Christ as a Son over His own house.’ Heb. 3:6.”³³

4.2.5 Waggoner’s Anti–Arian Formula

Nevertheless, Waggoner attempts to engage the antinomy between eternity and Christ being begotten from the bosom of the Father. Regarding Christ’s temporality, Waggoner developed a keen argument against the Arian formula—“there was once when he was not”—*en pote hote ouk en*—by explaining it in a way that a mathematician would be gloriously discouraged from viewing it as a potential statistic deviation from the standard. Thus, as he writes,

“[t]here was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father (John 8:42; 1:18), but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is *practically without beginning* [emphasis added]. But the point is that Christ is a begotten Son, and not a created subject. He has by inheritance a more excellent Name than the angels; He is ‘a Son over His own house.’ Heb. 1:4; 3:6. And since He is the only-begotten Son of God, He is of the very substance and nature of God, and possesses by birth all the attributes of God; for the Father was pleased that His Son should be the express image of His Person, the brightness of His glory, and filled with all the fullness of the Godhead.”³⁴

4.2.6 Waggoner’s Trinitarianism in Redemption

As a conclusion, it is important to note that, if de-contextualized, the way Waggoner formulates his explanation might be suspected of semi-Arianism. However, read in the context of his Christology, there is no doubt on Waggoner’s Trinitarian position. His

³² Ibid., 11–12.

³³ Ibid., 12.

³⁴ Ibid., 21–22.

interpretation of the relationship between Justifier and Justification by Faith is further enhanced in the context of redemption.

“It is not an accident that the wonderful declaration concerning Christ as Creator is connected with the statement that in Him we have redemption. No; when the apostle makes known his desire that we should be ‘strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power,’ he lets us know what that glorious power is. When he tells us about being delivered from the power of darkness, he lets us know something of the power of the Deliverer. It is for our comfort that we are told that the head of the church is the Creator of all things. We are told that he upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3), in order that we may rest in the assurance that: ‘The Hand which bears all nature up Shall guard His children well. [. . .] His power is, in fact, the ability to create everything from nothing; therefore, He can work wonders through those who have no strength. He can bring strength out of weakness.’”³⁵

The unidirectional relationship between the Justifier and Justification by Faith is further enhanced by Waggoner when he writes that

“Christ died ‘that He might bring us to God’ (1 Peter 3:18); but if He lacked one iota of being equal to God, He could not bring us to Him. Divinity means having the attributes of Deity. If Christ were not Divine, then we should have only a human sacrifice.”³⁶

4.3 Providence and Salvation: A Gateway for Waggoner’s Potential for Christological Dialogue with Eastern Christianity

Having Waggoner’s logical interplay between the doctrine of justification and the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology explained, I consider necessary to evaluate his Christology against the historical platform of the normative doctrine of Trinity, as defined by Eastern Christianity. The purpose of a comparative platform is to explore Waggoner’s potential for a Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity, as well as to demonstrate that although Waggoner was not influenced by the Orthodox thinking, he arrived at similar conclusions, as did the Orthodox, by studying the logic of the Scripture.³⁷ Further analysis of mutuality will be tested in the next chapter as I will compare Ellet J. Waggoner and Dumitru Stăniloae; two Trinitarian theologians (Adventist and respectively Orthodox), who wrote at different times and in different contexts, but who held the Scripture as the summit authority of the divine revelation.

³⁵ Ibid., 34–35.

³⁶ Ibid., 44.

³⁷ George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 29–37.

As it will be concluded, the interplay between justification and the development of the Trinitarian doctrine does not imply a relationship of causality between Orthodox Christianity and Adventism, but it regards their sagas as parallel tracks of the same road.

I will start from the historically demonstrable assumption that Seventh-day Adventism has not been influenced by the thinking of early Christianity, and as such I will explore in depth Waggoner's Christology, as derived from his interpretation of Scripture. I shall also recognize from the outset that both, Adventism and Orthodoxy, struggled with a similar set of theological propositions, and as such it may be safe to assume that in virtue of their similarity, both followed the same logic of divine revelation as embodied in the Scripture, and both engaged the same questions about the identity of Jesus Christ,³⁸ Albeit at different times.

In Waggoner's understanding, God's providence is manifested as sacrificial love for creation:

"The exhortation to consider Jesus, and also the reason therefore are given in Heb. 12:1-3: 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God,'"³⁹

and as *redemption*, or *salvation*.

"In the light of this great truth, there is no room for the controversy about redemption being greater than creation, because redemption is creation. See 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24. The power of redemption is the power of creation; the power of God unto salvation is the power which can take human nothingness and make of it that which shall be throughout eternal ages to the praise of the glory of the grace of God. 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.' 1 Peter 4:19"⁴⁰

Divine providence implies salvation which is embedded in the atonement,

³⁸ Cf. Richard Rice, *Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1997.

³⁹ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

“Christ is a part of the Godhead, possessing all the attributes of Divinity, being the equal of the Father in all respects, as Creator and Lawgiver, is the only force there is in the atonement. It is this alone which makes redemption a possibility.”⁴¹

Waggoner is convinced that man is justified by grace, and not by his acts, which could only arrogantly entitle him to be saved.

“The apostle Paul, having proved that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, so that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight, proceeds to say that we are ‘justified [made righteous] freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.’ Rom. 3:24-26.”⁴²

This is because righteousness is a divine gift, as Waggoner plainly states when he writes “[t]hat righteousness is a gift, is plainly stated by Paul in Rom. 5:17.”⁴³

4.3.1 Justifier’s Intention: Divine Providence and Protoevangelion

Prior to the Reformation, the Christians understood *divine providence* to be God’s unending love and protection of creation in general, and of the human being in particular.⁴⁴

This classical perspective on divine providence remained at the core of Adventist theology, particularly within the millennial doctrinal development. It also remains paramount to Waggoner, as no argument is to be found in his writings to demonstrate the contrary.

Simply put, God granted His divine assistance to the entire creation so that the creation itself would fulfil its original aim: that is, God’s glorification and the happiness of creature.⁴⁵ Yet, God’s cooperation with man—who was created to be

⁴¹ Ibid., 43–44.

⁴² Ibid., 59–60.

⁴³ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁴ Cf. Kathryn Tanner, “Creation and providence,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 111–126.

⁴⁵ The understanding that the scope of creation was God’s glorification and the happiness of the creatures was paramount during early Christianity, although as a succinct “formula” it became widely known through the work of the Presbyterian pastor and mathematician, Thomas Bayes, in 1731, in London, a work which he called, *Divine Benevolence, or an Attempt to Prove That the Principal End of the Divine Providence and Government is the Happiness of His Creatures*. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

conscious and free—is conditioned by the human willingness to cooperate (or not) with God, in the attainment of perfection, and of everlasting life. As we will see below, Waggoner explains how justification begins as a divine intention out of love which yet awaits a human response by faith, in line with Christ’s invitation recorded in Matthew’s testimony, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5: 48)

Throughout Christian history, the reality of the providence has been generally “confirmed” by the observation of the harmony of the universe (natural revelation), and through the scripture and special events of divine intervention in human history (supernatural revelation.)⁴⁶ According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ reassures His disciples of the divine providence when He tells them not to worry about their survival.

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ‘And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” (Matt. 6:25–32)

Through His providence, God not only conserves the creation, but also cooperates with, works together with, and assists the human being, while governing the entire cosmos. Created in God’s image, man is superior to the rest of creation; that is a “crown of creation,” and a “priest of the entire cosmos.”⁴⁷

Waggoner’s thinking regarding the divine providence is highly similar to the Orthodox perspective, whereby divine providence is manifested harmoniously as a

⁴⁶ Nicolas Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1953. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

⁴⁷ Expressions such as “crown of creation” and “priest of the entire cosmos” are widely used by the Orthodox literature, in reference to the early Christian literature, but rarely any reference is given with regard to authorship.

general protection of the entire creation and as a special care for the human being, while human being becomes a steward of God's creation in return.⁴⁸

In a more systematic sense, divine providence manifests itself as *ordinary* providence, through the intelligent design of the laws of the universe, and as *extraordinary* providence, through special interventions in human history which defy natural laws.

Waggoner's interpretation of divine providence is channelled through the work of Christ whom he regards as a Creator, by virtue of a shared divinity. This is as simple as it is powerful.

"The idea is that, although Christ was in the form of God, being 'the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person' (Heb. 1:3), having all the attributes of God, being the Ruler of the universe, and the One whom all Heaven delighted to honor, He did not think that any of these things were to be desired, so long as men were lost and without strength. He could not enjoy His glory while man was an outcast, without hope. So He emptied Himself, divested Himself of all His riches and His glory, and took upon Himself the nature of man, in order that He might redeem him."⁴⁹

Here, Waggoner takes a kenotic approach to the divine providence and equates it with the miracle of salvation; a privileged moment in time when God communicates directly with humanity. This is a superlative form of attention that God shows to His creation in general and to humanity in particular.⁵⁰

In Waggoner's view, this attention is expressed in the form of an unspeakable love to the extent that God identifies Himself with the man, by taking human flesh to suffer together with the man, and to communicate His sympathy and empathy to humanity in line with Paul, who writes,

⁴⁸ As Basil the Great reflected in the fourth century, in his Seventh Homily of the Hexaemeron ('The Six Days of Creation'), "If divine Providence has established these marvelous laws in favor of creatures devoid of reason, it is to induce you to ask for your salvation from God. Is there a wonder which He will not perform for you—you have been made in His image—when for so little a bird, the great, the fearful sea is held in check and is commanded in the midst of winter to be calm." See, Basil the Great, *The Treatise the Spiritu Sancto, the Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *NPNF, Vol. 8 Second Series*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 98.

⁴⁹ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 25.

⁵⁰ William James Abraham, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism*, Oxford University Press, USA, 1982. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.” (Heb. 1:1-2)

One might be tempted, however, to suspect that by governing the world, God limits human freedom, or is the very cause of evil.⁵¹

As valid as this logic may appear under certain circumstances, this logic is faulty from the perspective of Scripture and to a certain extent from Waggoner’s perspective.

4.3.1.1 Freedom and Evil

From a biblical perspective in the New Testament, the Saviour manifested a definite regard for human freedom. “*If you want* [emphasis added] to enter life, keep the commandments.” (Matt. 19:17)

As for the existence of *physical evil* (imperfections, pain, suffering, and death),⁵² or *moral evil* (sin, and sinfulness),⁵³ the early Church interpreters considered that evil, in general, does not exist as a material or spiritual entity into itself, but it is the absence of good, the possibility for disorder, and the misuse of freedom.⁵⁴ Interestingly, and contrary to the expectation of the influence of Western culture⁵⁵ which Waggoner was subjected to, Waggoner’s position is similar to the one from the early Church, even though this is not clearly stated. It is implied in several places in reference to the work of Satan, as we will see below.

⁵¹ Cf. N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL: 2013.

⁵² Roger Burggraeve, “Violence and the vulnerable face of the other: The vision of Emmanuel Levinas on moral evil and our responsibility,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (1999): 29–45.

⁵³ Ralph Wedgwood, “The moral evil demons,” *Disagreement* (2010): 216–246.

⁵⁴ According to a Byzantine scholar, Dmitri Obolensky, the concerns with existence of moral and physical evil stimulated concerns in every culture, and in every area of philosophical inquiry, as the goal was either to defeat or to destroy evil from its roots. As Obolensky wrote, “the metaphysician and the theologian must explain the possibility of any relation between the infinite and the finite, between the perfection of the Creator and the imperfection of the creature, between God and the world; and those men who, without being philosophers, believe that God is the source of all perfection and goodness and that He has created the world, cannot but recognize that in this world moral and physical evil—suffering, cruelty, decay, death – is abundantly present.” See, Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 1.

⁵⁵ In the western culture, evil is perceived in a Manichaean fashion, as an existential battle between two competing, yet equal forces. The world is in a complete unrest as these antithetical forces continue to challenge each other in an endless duel. See, Marian Gh. Simion, *Religion and Political Conflict: From Dialectics to Cross-Domain Charting* Preface by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I (Montréal: Presses internationales polytechnique, 2011), 20.

For Waggoner, freedom is lost under the power of sin. The *pose non pecare* ('one could have not committed sin') ability that Adam and Eve had in paradise was lost. Still, this formula remains applicable within the framework of man's freedom of choice, as a divine gift that existed both in the paradise and after. Nevertheless, once sin has occurred—both by choice and by Satan's deception—man lost this freedom, which can only be regained through divine grace. As Waggoner explains,

"The fact that sin controls, proves that a man is a slave; and although everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin, the slavery becomes unendurable when the sinner has had a glimpse of freedom, and longs for it, yet cannot break the chains which bind him to sin. The impossibility for the unrenewed man to do even the good that he would like to do has been shown already from Rom. 8:7, 8 and Gal. 5:17."⁵⁶

Because the misuse of freedom clouds the mind, weakens the will, and perverts the desire, evil is also associated with a human intention of doing something against the created nature. This is similar to the Orthodox view that, the measure of evil is the personal intention to harm and defy the golden rule.⁵⁷

Lack of freedom is the bondage of sin, for as Waggoner explains,

"It is the bondage of sin—the slavery of being compelled to sin, even against the will, by the power of inherited and acquired evil propensities and habits."⁵⁸

It is within this canopy of divine providence that God gives the man the chance to become immortal, even after falling into the slavery of sin.

Even here, as Waggoner explains, Christ's sacrifice implies freedom. This is because divine providence does not obstruct the human freedom of will.

Yet again, Waggoner follows the same line of thought. For example, by distinguishing between God's action, human action, and the absence of both (divine and

⁵⁶ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 86.

⁵⁷ As Basil the Great wrote in his *Ninth Homily of the Hexaemeron*, evil is nothing but a human intention to hurt what God has created. As Basil states, "We shall not be able to say in self-justification that we have learned useful knowledge in books, since the untaught law of nature makes us choose that which is advantageous to us. Do you know what good you ought to do to your neighbor? The good that you expect from him yourself. Do you know what is evil? That which you would not wish another to do to you. Neither botanical researches nor the experience of simples have made animals discover those which are useful to them; but each knows naturally what is salutary and marvelously appropriates what suits its nature." See, Basil the Great, *The Treatise the Spiritu Sancto, the Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *NPNF*, Vol. 8 Second Series, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 103.

⁵⁸ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 87.

human), John of Damascus explains that neither God nor man is liable for events unaffected by their will. At the same time, for Waggoner the events that are considered ‘good’ or ‘evil’ are the exclusive products of human intention, which springs from man’s free will.

“Under which, then, of these categories are we to bring what happens through the agency of man, if indeed man is not the cause and beginning of action? For it would not be right to ascribe to God actions that are sometimes base and unjust: nor may we ascribe these to necessity, for they are not such as ever continue the same: nor to fate, for fate implies not possibility only but necessity: nor to nature, for nature’s province is animals and plants: nor to chance, for the actions of men are not rare and unexpected: nor to accident, for that is used in reference to the casual occurrences that take place in the world of lifeless and irrational things. We are left then with this fact, that the man who acts and makes is himself the author of his own works, and is a creature endowed with free-will. . . . If then man deliberates, he deliberates with a view to action. For all deliberation is with a view to and on account of action.”⁵⁹

In summing up the early Christian patristic theology written on the subjects of divine providence, freedom, and evil, the Romanian Orthodox theologian, Dumitru Stăniloae, concludes that the ultimate scope of providence is the deification of the entire creation, regardless of the sinful state in which the world might find itself. This is an act of sublime love that the Creator manifests for his creature.

“Even in the state of sin, it is providence that preserves and directs the world. This means that the world is not compromised nor will ever be brought to utter destruction by the force of evil but keeps its worth in the eyes of God. Moreover, it is possible for the world to be preserved by God in a state such that it can guide humankind toward salvation and deification. Indeed, humans are beings guided toward this goal.”⁶⁰

Stăniloae’s interpretation was crafted as a summation of the harmony between the early Christian thought and the Scripture, which insisted that the world was created good and perfect—“God saw that it was good,” (Gen. 1:10; 1:12; 1:18; 1:21; 1:25)—since perfect is its Creator.

4.3.1.1.1 The Catholic View of Evil

Contrary to the early Christian view, the Catholic teachings came to change this view by expounding that evil is not particularly an intention to disobey God, by doing contrary

⁵⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁶⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology. Volume Two: The World: Creation and Deification*, trans. Ioan Ioniță and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Press, 2000), 191.

to His will. Evil exists *because* God created an imperfect world; thus making God responsible for the existence of evil. As the current Catholic *Catechism* states,

“But why did God not create a world so perfect that no evil could exist in it? With infinite power God could always create something better. But with infinite wisdom and goodness God freely willed to create a world ‘in a state of journeying’ towards its ultimate perfection. In God’s plan this process of becoming involves the appearance of certain beings and the disappearance of others, the existence of the more perfect alongside the less perfect, both constructive and destructive forces of nature. With physical good there exists also *physical* evil as long as creation has not reached perfection.”⁶¹

In fact, the early Christians understood the world imperfections to be the consequence of Adam’s disobedience, which compromised the beauty of the world. To consider the world has having been created imperfect, or even “in a state of journeying,” would have been unacceptable to the early Christians. The earth became cursed for Adam precisely because of Adam’s disobedience. As Irenaeus of Lyons wrote,

“immediately after Adam had transgressed, . . . ‘God did indeed transfer the curse to the earth, that it might not remain in man.’⁶²

Therefore, considering the Catholic deviance from the early Christian interpretation of the world as being created perfect—a position faithfully preserved by the Orthodox theology—by appealing to an impermanent Manichaeism, the Catholics intended to find a logical explanation and reconcile the existence of natural and moral evil, with the definition of God as the supreme good; however it failed to be a convincing argument at least for the Orthodox theological position.

4.3.1.1.2 Waggoner’s View of Evil

Returning to Waggoner, he rarely makes references to evil. He rather equates evil with the harm created by the consequences of the original sin.

“Since evil is a part of man’s very nature, being inherited by each individual from a long line of sinful ancestors, it is very evident that whatever righteousness springs from him must be only like ‘filthy rags’ (Isa. 64:6), compared with the spotless robe of the righteousness of God.”⁶³

⁶¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana/Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 82.

⁶² Irenaeus *Against Heresies*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, in *ANF Vol.1* eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 456.

⁶³ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 54–55.

Waggoner's logic seems to emerge from his scientific mind, as a mathematical insight derived from the rule of signs. Man cannot do right if ruled by wrong, as much as plus multiplied with minus results in minus. Brought on the spiritual realm, this logic implies that evil multiplied with evil yields good because it extinguishes into itself by the fact that a contrary multiplied against the contrary can only result in good. At the same time, good multiplied with good yields good, just as plus multiplied with plus results in plus.⁶⁴ As Waggoner writes,

“a man cannot do good until he first becomes good. Therefore, deeds done by a sinful person have no effect whatever to make him righteous, but, on the contrary, coming from an evil heart, they are evil, and so add to the sum of his sinfulness. Only evil can come from an evil heart, and multiplied evil cannot make one good deed; therefore, it is useless for an evil person to think to become righteous by his own efforts. He must first be made righteous before he can do the good that is required of him, and which he wants to do.”⁶⁵

In fact, Waggoner's concept of evil is yet again consonant with the Orthodox outlook in the sense that evil is not regarded necessarily in a Manichaean fashion—as a force equally powerful with the good—but it is personalized as Satan and as such far less powerful than God. Waggoner does not classify Satan as a fallen angel because he does not spend time exploring who Satan is or where Satan originates from.⁶⁶ For

⁶⁴ Writing about the concept of evil in the Orthodox context, Marian Gh. Simion explains that “the monist approach resolves the paradox of evil by analogy with the role of zero in mathematics—a model apparently formulated by one of the prominent early Christian writers, Dionysius the Areopagite.” See, Marian Gh. Simion, *Religion and Political Conflict: From Dialectics to Cross-Domain Charting* Preface by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I (Montréal: Presses internationales polytechnique, 2011), 148–9. Quoting two of Dionysius' exegetes, “we may illustrate this thought by the nature of zero in mathematics, which is non-entity (since, added to numbers, it makes no difference) and yet has an annihilating force (since it reduces to zero all numbers that are multiplied by it.) Even so evil is nothing and yet manifests itself in the annihilation of the things it qualifies. See, W.J. Sparrow-Simpson, and W.K. Lowther Clarke (Eds.) *Dionysius the Areopagite* (London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1957), 20; as quoted by Marian Simion, *Ibid.*, 149.

⁶⁵ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 55.

⁶⁶ In attempting to explain the origins of evil, in the First Homily of his *Hexaemeron*, the early Christian writer, Basil the Great, recognizes that evil was not created by God and does not exist as an entity. It only exists as a possibility for disorder, and as the absence of good. “If then evil is neither uncreated nor created by God, from whence comes its nature?” asks Basil. “Certainly that evil exists, no one living in the world will deny. What shall we say then? Evil is not a living animated essence; it is the condition of the soul opposed to virtue, developed in the careless on account of their falling away from good.” According to Basil the Great, evil has no intrinsic logic, if one is to regard God as the supreme good. In fact, “it is equally impious to say that evil has its origin from God, because the contrary cannot proceed from its contrary,” writes Basil the Great. “Life does not engender death; darkness is not the origin of light; sickness is not the maker of health. In the changes of conditions there are transitions from one condition to the contrary; but in genesis each being proceeds from its like, and not from its contrary.” See, Basil the Great, *The Treatise the Spiritu Sancto, the Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters*,

Waggoner, Satan is a deceiver who provides false testimony, and acts antithetically to the divine truth. Therefore, “we bid Satan be gone with his false witness against God,” states Waggoner.⁶⁷ Even though able to fully control human being, by contrast to God’s love, Satan has limited power over the believer,

“Our ascription of praise shows to Satan that we have obtained re-enforcements; and as he has tested the power of the help that is granted to us, he knows that he can do nothing on that occasion, and so he leaves us.”⁶⁸

Therefore, once personalized, Satan represents an imagined entity identifiable with anything that distracts the believer from the path to salvation. In the very few occasions when Waggoner writes about Satan, the information he gives does not contradict the Orthodox Christian view, making it impossible to find any disagreement between the two traditions.

4.3.1.1.3 Sin, Punishment, Justification and Salvation

In theory, the inter-confessional semantic difference between *justification*, *redemption* and *salvation* has been a subject of debates.⁶⁹ In practice this terminology is the result of incremental attempts to find the most specific terminology to define and explain the process of eliminating obstacles in a man’s quest for immortality. Whether “saved” from something, or “redeemed” from a contrite bond, or “justified” (literally ‘lined up’ with God) on the path to immortality epitomizes something more than semantics, as these terms point to specific procedures on how to attain everlasting life.

4.3.1.1.3.1 Original Sin

Given the state of sinfulness triggered by the primordial disobedience of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1–24), the questions had been concentrated on how to restore the broken

trans. Blomfield Jackson, in *NPNF, Vol. 8 Second Series*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 61.

⁶⁷ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 55.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁹ Cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification*. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2004. See also; Paul A. Rainbow, *The Way of Salvation: The Role of Christian Obedience in Justification*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

relationships between God and man, and how to return Adam and Eve (and their posterity) back to the paradise.

The early Christians provided an answer of hope. The original sin was believed to be transmitted indeed from the parents to the child,⁷⁰ not as personal liability and an innate guilt, but as a condition and a state of sinfulness. It was so because it was believed that the original sin had dire consequences over human's soul (the clouding of the mind, the weakening of the will, the perversion of the heart), and over human's body (the physical weakness, the disease and the physical death.) As Irenaeus of Lyons wrote in his, *Against Heresies*, Book I, Chapter XXX, 9,

“Adam and Eve previously had light, and clear, and as it were spiritual bodies, such as they were at their creation; but when they came to this world, these changed into bodies more opaque, and gross, and sluggish. Their soul also was feeble and languid, inasmuch as they had received from their creator a merely mundane inspiration. . . . They thereupon became patient, knowing that only for a time they would be enveloped in the body. They also found out food, through the guidance of Sophia; and when they were satisfied, they had carnal knowledge of each other, and begat Cain, whom the serpent, that had been cast down along with his sons, immediately laid hold of and destroyed by filling him with mundane oblivion, and urging into folly and audacity, so that, by slaying his brother Abel, he was the first to bring to light envy and death.”⁷¹

However, to the early Christians, the original sin was not taken to signify a radical collapse, as it was the case with the evil angels, because the image of God in man was only weakened—not destroyed—as throughout generations, the desire for good, holiness and completeness remained inscribed in each human being.⁷² As Irenaeus of Lyons continued in his, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter XXIII, 3,

“it was for this reason, too, that immediately after Adam had transgressed, as the Scripture relates, He pronounced no curse against Adam personally, but against the ground, in reference to his works, as a certain person among the ancients has observed: ‘God did indeed transfer the curse to the earth, that it might not remain in man.’”⁷³

Because Adam's disobedience triggered an apparent “competition” between God and humanity—to use René Girard's formula of mimesis—the accusation passed

⁷⁰ Didymus the Blind, *Against the Manichaeans* 8, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, XXXIX, col. 1096.

⁷¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, in *ANF Vol. I* eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 357.

⁷² John of Damascus, *Homily on Dried Fig Tree*, 2, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, XCVI, col. 580.

⁷³ Irenaeus *Against Heresies*, trans. A. Cleveland Coxe, in *ANF Vol. I* eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 456.

successively from Adam unto Eve, and from Eve unto the Serpent. The guilt was thus stabilized upon the originator of disobedience—that is the Serpent—giving humanity a way out. As Irenaeus of Lyons, continues,

“the curse in all its fullness fell upon the serpent, which had beguiled them. ‘And God,’ it is declared, ‘said to the serpent: Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above all the beasts of the earth.’”⁷⁴

In fact, in the original state, God’s image in man was perfect, the moral power was replete, the physical body was in a complete state of health, and man was in full harmony with God, with himself, and with the nature. As Tertullian wrote in his *Five Books Against Marcion*, Book II, Chapter IV,

“As yet the Word knew no malediction, because He was a stranger to malefaction. We shall see what reasons required this also of God. Meanwhile the world consisted of all things good, plainly foreshowing how much good was preparing for him for whom all this was provided. Who indeed was so worthy of dwelling amongst the works of God, as he who was His own image and likeness? That image was wrought out by a goodness even more operative than its wont, with no imperious word, but with friendly hand preceded by an almost affable utterance: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’”⁷⁵

Once the original sin was committed, the harmony between man and God was broken indeed, but only in a temporary sense, because God promises salvation. The incarnation of the Logos has ecological implications in the sense that it is not only the human being that is being restored but the entire nature is being sanctified.

With respect to the Original Sin, Waggoner’s position comes close to the Orthodox interpretation, which states that Christ was in every aspect like any human being except for the sinful nature. According to Waggoner,

“[a] little thought will be sufficient to show anybody that if Christ took upon Himself the likeness of man, in order that He might redeem man, it must have been sinful man that He was made like, for it is sinful man that He came to redeem. Death could have no power over a sinless man, as Adam was in Eden; and it could not have had any power over Christ, if the Lord had not laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Moreover, the fact that Christ took upon Himself the flesh, not of a sinless being, but of a sinful man, that is, that the flesh which He assumed had all the weaknesses and sinful tendencies to which fallen human nature is subject, is shown by the statement that He ‘was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.’ David had all the passions of human nature. He says of himself, ‘Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.’ Ps. 51:5.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, trans. D. Holmes, in *ANF Vol. 3*. eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 300.

⁷⁶ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 24.

Waggoner's logic of sin is anchored in the concepts of unrighteousness and transgression of the law, whereby sin is their common denominator. As Waggoner demonstrates,

“This may be proved again, as follows: ‘All unrighteousness is sin.’ 1 John 5:17. ‘Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.’ 1 John 3:4. Sin is the transgression of the law, and it is also unrighteousness; therefore sin and unrighteousness are identical. But if unrighteousness is transgression of the law, righteousness must be obedience to the law. Or, to put the proposition into mathematical form:—

Unrighteousness = sin. 1 John 5:17.

Transgression of the law = sin. 1 John 3:4.

Therefore, according to the axiom that two things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, we have:—

Unrighteousness = transgression of the law

which is a negative equation. The same thing, stated in positive terms, would be:—

Righteousness = obedience to the law.”⁷⁷

In Waggoner's consideration another consequence of the original sin is that it triggers additional sins by each individual.

“Now make the application. ‘The man was lame from his mother's womb,’ unable to help himself. He would gladly have walked, but he could not. We likewise can all say, with David, ‘Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.’ Ps. 51:5. As a consequence, we are by nature so weak that we cannot do the things that we would. As each year of the man's life increased his inability to walk, by increasing the weight of his body, while his limbs grew no stronger, so the repeated practice of sin, as we grow older, strengthens its power over us.”⁷⁸

Nevertheless, in line with the Orthodox position, Christ removes both the original sin as well as the personal sins.

“It was an utter impossibility for that man to walk; yet the Name of Christ, through faith in it, gave him perfect soundness and freedom from his infirmity. So we, through the faith which is by Him, may be made whole, and enabled to do the thing which hitherto has been impossible.”⁷⁹

4.3.1.1.3.2 *Punishment*

Contrary to what Waggoner writes, the early Christians considered that God's punishment was pedagogical in essence, and not a juridical punishment for lawbreaking. Yet, on the agreement side, punishment was not an act of divine rage or abandonment either, as the logic was quite simple for both Waggoner and early Christians. What mother, in the right state of mind, would kill her baby because the baby touched the hot

⁷⁷ Ibid., 47–48.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 91.

stove; even though the mother warned the baby not to go near the stove? As the second century writer, Theophilus of Antioch explained to Autolycus, in Book II, chapter xxvi,

“God showed great kindness to man in this, that He did not suffer him to remain in sin for ever; but, as it were, by a kind of banishment, cast him out of Paradise, in order that, having by punishment expiated, within an appointed time, the sin, and having been disciplined, he should afterwards be restored.”⁸⁰

Therefore, punishment was rather an exercise of awareness in the sense that the state of sinfulness is not inherent into human nature, and the world was created to be perfect. It is only that in the aftermath of the original sin, there was a need for a period of time in which the relationship between God and man could be vindicated and restored.⁸¹

Waggoner seems to be a positivist in the sense that, in his Christology, he rarely touches upon the subjects of punishment and evil. His view of God is that of goodness, compassion, forgiveness, unexplainable care, and sacrificial love. For him, the question of punishment is the simple consequence of breaking the law. Yet, the unending love displayed by Christ is enough for Waggoner to simply disregard punishment as a lawbreaking mechanism. As he writes,

“the One who creates must certainly have authority to guide and control. We read in John 5:22, 23 the words of Christ, that ‘the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.’ As Christ is the manifestation of the Father in creation, so is He the manifestation of the Father in giving and executing the law. [. . .] In Num. 21:4-6 we have the partial record of an incident that took place while the children of Israel were in the wilderness. [. . .] Why have ye brought us up into the wilderness? They found fault with their Leader. This is why they were destroyed by serpents.”⁸²

4.3.1.1.3.3 Justification

The meaning of Justification is defined by Waggoner in the following terms:

“To justify means to make righteous, or to show one to be righteous. Now it is evident that perfect obedience to a perfectly righteous law would constitute one a righteous person. It

⁸⁰ Theophilus of Antioch, *Theophilus to Autolycus*, trans. Marcus Dods, in *ANF Vol. 2*. eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 104.

⁸¹ Cf. Thomas Talbott, “Punishment, Forgiveness, and Divine Justice,” *Religious Studies* 29, no. 02 (1993): 151–168.

⁸² Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 39–40.

was God's design that such obedience should be rendered to the law by all His creatures; and in this way the law was ordained unto life. Rom. 7:10.”⁸³

In a general sense, justification refers to being made right, or just, or righteous, or being perfectly aligned with God. Through justification it is understood that man is (re)aligned with God through Christ's atoning blood of sacrifice, his sin is forgiven, he is reconciled with God (Rom. 4:20–25), and humanity is saved from eternal death as long as man continues to remain on God's path.⁸⁴ However, the possibility to sin again necessitates a continual realignment by works that derive from faith. (James 2:24) Remaining justified is possible only through Christ and the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 7:7–25; Rom. 8:1–11) The concept of justification evolved more in the West, and as a result of the impact of the Roman culture.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the Greek spirit of the East took a holistic view by looking less into a juridical type of relationship, and regarded salvation more as a devotional abandonment of one's self.⁸⁶

For Waggoner, Christ is God Himself, and as such, He has complete power over the law.

“Indeed, the fact that Christ is a part of the Godhead, possessing all the attributes of Divinity, being the equal of the Father in all respects, as Creator and Lawgiver, is the only force there is in the atonement. It is this alone which makes redemption a possibility.”⁸⁷

Thus, justification takes place through atonement, for as Waggoner argues,

“Is it asked how Christ could be the Mediator between God and man and also the Lawgiver? We have not to explain how it can be but only to accept the Scripture record that it is so. And the fact that it is so is that which gives strength to the doctrine of the atonement. The sinner's surety of full and free pardon lies in the fact that the Lawgiver Himself, the One against whom he has rebelled and whom he has defied, is the One who gave Himself for us. How is it possible for anyone to doubt the honesty of God's purpose, or His perfect good-will to men, when He gave Himself for their redemption?”⁸⁸

4.3.1.1.3.4 Salvation

From a general Protestant perspective, salvation is a process accomplished in several stages. It starts through Christ's atoning *sacrifice* (Rom. 6:14), which frees man from

⁸³ Ibid., 51.

⁸⁴ Cf. Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

⁸⁵ Cf. Richard T. Snyder, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Punishment*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001. See also Paul Perl, and Jamie S. McClintock, “The Catholic ‘Consistent Life Ethic’ and Attitudes Toward Capital Punishment and Welfare Reform,” *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 3 (2001): 275–299.

⁸⁶ Timothy J. Fullerton and Bruce Hunsberger, “A Unidimensional Measure of Christian Orthodoxy,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (1982): 317–326.

⁸⁷ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 43–44.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 45.

under the penalty of death. The atoning sacrifice removes man from under the dominion of sin and death, and brings him under God's *grace*. To be saved, man ought to remain under *grace* (Ephesians 2:5–8), ought to *repent* each time he commits a sin (Heb. 2:3; 6:4–8; 10:26–31), and ought to renew his chance for salvation, by seeking and receiving God's *forgiveness* (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15). Through the ongoing *repentance* and *restoration* man is *sanctified* or made holy (Heb. 10:10–14); but only the man who endures to the end shall be saved. (Matt. 24:13; Matt. 13:13)

Regarded as the ultimate goal, Waggoner reflects on salvation also as a sublime divine gift:

“Who, then, can be saved? Can there, then, be such a thing as a righteous person?—Yes, for the Bible often speaks of them. It speaks of Lot as ‘that righteous man;’ it says, ‘Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings’ (Isa. 3:10), thus indicating that there will be righteous persons to receive the reward; and it plainly declares that there will be a righteous nation at the last, saying: ‘In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.’ Isa. 26:1, 2. David says, ‘Thy law is the truth.’ Ps. 119:142. It is not only truth, but it is the sum of all truth; consequently, the nation that keeps the truth will be a nation that keeps the law of God. Such will be doers of His will, and they shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 7:21.”⁸⁹

As such, salvation is based exclusively on mercy, or the “unmerited favour” which collides with justice:

“Notice that the publican did something more than bewail his sinfulness; he asked for mercy. What is mercy?—It is unmerited favor. It is the disposition to treat a man better than he deserves. [. . .] the measure by which God treats us better than we deserve when we humbly come to Him, is the distance between earth and the highest heaven. And in what respect does He treat us better than we deserve?—In taking our sins away from us”⁹⁰

Therefore, salvation is the gift of the forgiveness of sins.

“It is because righteousness is a gift that eternal life, which is the reward of righteousness, is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ has been set forth by God as the One through whom forgiveness of sins is to be obtained; and this forgiveness consists simply in the declaration of His righteousness (which is the righteousness of God) for their remission. [. . .] God puts His righteousness upon the believer. He covers him with it, so that his sin no more appears.”⁹¹

As part of salvation, for Waggoner, forgiveness of sins supersedes the law and overwhelms measurability.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56–57.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 59.

⁹¹ Ibid., 60–61.

“But what about ‘the righteousness of God without the law’? How does that accord with the statement that the law is the righteousness of God, and that outside of its requirements there is no righteousness? There is no contradiction here. The law is not ignored by this process. Note carefully: Who gave the law?—Christ. How did He speak it?—‘As one having authority,’ even as God. The law sprang from Him the same as from the Father, and is simply a declaration of the righteousness of His character. Therefore the righteousness which comes by the faith of Jesus Christ is the same righteousness that is epitomized in the law; and this is further proved by the fact that it is ‘witnessed by the law.’”⁹²

Furthermore, forgiveness of sins goes beyond the formality, as the memory of the past becomes erased as well.

“forgiveness of sins is something more than a mere form, something more than a mere entry in the books of record in heaven, to the effect that the sin has been canceled. The forgiveness of sins is a reality; it is something tangible, something that vitally affects the individual. It actually clears him from guilt; and if he is cleared from guilt, is justified, made righteous, he has certainly undergone a radical change. He is, indeed, another person. For he obtained this righteousness for the remission of sins, in Christ.”⁹³

4.3.1.1.4 Inter-Confessional Considerations

Within the quest for semantics, a parallel narrative develops with regard to the primordial state of humanity in the paradise. The views of the primordial state are highly significant because they affect the way the original sin (and its effects) came to be interpreted by various Christian traditions.

The thread of opinions concerning the nature of salvation—which emerged during early Christianity, and were allegedly preserved not only by the Orthodox, but also by the Catholic traditions—emphasizes the crucial importance of mutual cooperation between God and man.

In highlighting the inter-confessional perspective, I will do so from an Orthodox perspective for two reasons. First, for structural reasons, the comparative aspect of this dissertation rests on the Orthodox frame of reference. Second, SDA Church has yet to develop an ecumenical strategy, and until such time comes, it is important to understand the nature of the conversation.

For canonical reasons, to the Orthodox it is mandatory that any theological speculation should remain in the proximity of the early teachings, the Ecumenical

⁹² Ibid., 61–62.

⁹³ Ibid., 66.

Councils, and in synchronicity with the way doctrines had been stabilized by the liturgical literature of Eastern Christianity.⁹⁴

From an Orthodox perspective, God's contribution to human salvation is considered *objective* in the sense that it is addressed as a general invitation to humanity; while man's contribution is considered *subjective* as a personal acceptance and cooperation with God's grace.⁹⁵

4.3.1.1.4.1 Orthodox Perceptions of the Catholic Position on the Original Sin

From the perspective of the Orthodox theology—which claims to have preserved the early Christian doctrines accurately, as formulated during the Seven Ecumenical Councils—the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification (which abandoned the early formulations) starts from an arguably false premise, as it is strongly anchored into the original sin.

According to Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean, the Catholics claim that the original sin consisted exclusively in the loss of *dona superaddita*. *Dona Superaddita*,⁹⁶ or “the over added gifts” represent a combination between ‘*imago dei*’ and ‘original righteousness,’ which Adam and Eve enjoyed in the paradise, exclusively as an extra bonus or as *extra gifts*; which were not part of their created nature.

By this logic, if in the paradise Adam and Eve had some additional gifts (divine image and original righteousness), which were external to the human nature that God

⁹⁴ A fundamental work that explores this pattern was written by John A. McGuckin, a new convert to the Orthodox Church, who encountered first hand the dilemma of creativity within the Orthodox theology and the constraints of traditional theology. Fortunately, the patristic literature is rich enough so that if anyone takes a serious interest in exploring it, one would find sufficient space for creative theological writing. Cf. John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

⁹⁵ Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică, manual pentru seminariile teologice* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1991), 238–9.

⁹⁶ Harold William Perkins, *The Doctrine of Christian or Evangelical Perfection* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 77.

has created, then the Catholics inadvertently consider human nature as being created with blemishes,⁹⁷ thus contradicting the Scripture (Gen. 1:31).

Secondly, if human nature included an inherent opposition between the spiritual and the material dimensions prior to Adam and Eve committing the sin, then implicitly the human nature was created imperfect (due to this dichotomy between matter and spirit); thus contradicting the divine revelation, which states that “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”⁹⁸ (Gen. 1:31)

Furthermore, according to the Orthodox, the Catholic theologians insist that through the original sin, human nature itself was not dented at all because man lost only the external *dona superaddita*; an argument that yet again contradicts Gen. 1:31.

For the Catholic theology, redemption is no longer intended to be a restoration of human nature, but a restitution of the lost grace, and reconciliation by the recreation of a peaceful relationship with God. According to this perspective, from the multitude of meanings of redemption, the Catholic theology retains primarily the *satisfaction theory* of atonement, as formulated by the Council of Trent in 1547,⁹⁹ and then further elaborated upon by Anselm of Canterbury in his treatise *Cur Deus Homo*.

The satisfaction theory of atonement states that Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross in substitution for the human sin, in order to appease God’s wrath against Adam’s transgression that led to Adam being dispossessed of *dona superaddita*, thus calling for a divine sacrifice.

In Article 615 on the “Profession of Faith,” the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that,

“By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who ‘makes himself an *offering for sin*,’ when ‘he bore the sin of many,’ and

⁹⁷ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 192.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ J. Waterworth (transl.) *Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent* (Chicago: The Christian Symbolic Publication Society, 2003), 95–104.

who ‘shall make many to be accounted righteous,’ for ‘he shall bear their iniquities.’ Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father.”¹⁰⁰

This teaching, apparently, contradicts the early Christian perspectives offered by Irenaeus of Lyons (mentioned earlier) on the nature and subject of punishment—whereby punishment is destined for the Deceiver rather than for God’s most beloved creature. As Anselm writes in the seventh chapter of his *Cur Deus Homo*,

“For by the just judgment of God it was decreed, and, as it were, confirmed by writing, that, since man had sinned, he should not henceforth of himself have the power to avoid sin or the punishment of sin; for the spirit is out-going and not returning (est enim spiritus vadens et non rediens); and he who sins ought not to escape with impunity, unless pity spare the sinner, and deliver and restore him. Wherefore we ought not to believe that, on account of this writing, there can be found any justice on the part of the devil in his tormenting man. In fine, as there is never any injustice in a good angel, so in an evil angel there can be no justice at all. There was no reason, therefore, as respects the devil, why God should not make use of as own power against him for the liberation of man.”¹⁰¹

The logic of the Catholic interpretation of salvation is the following:

Sin consists in man’s refusal to give God what He is due: obedience and honor. Therefore, once committed, sin must be followed either by satisfaction or by punishment. Man can not honor God by repaying for the grievances simply because all that man has belongs to God anyway, and the satisfaction could not be a match for the insult; thus making its effectiveness impossible. Consequently, because man can not give this satisfaction, it was necessary for the Son of God to become man. Being without sin, the works of the Son of God are meritorious, but still owed to God, except only for sin which he did not have. Thus, the death of Jesus Christ is the only means to give God the required satisfaction. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

“This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices. First, it is a gift from God the father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience.”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ See Article 615 on the “Profession of Faith,” in Ratzinger, *Catechism*, 160.

¹⁰¹ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, e-version (Irontdale, AL: Franciscans of the Immaculate/ Eternal Word Television Network, accessed, March 18, 2017, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/CHRIST/CURDEUS.HTM>).

¹⁰² See Article 614 on the “Profession of Faith,” in Ratzinger, *Catechism*, 159.

Nevertheless, in order to emphasize Christ's divinity, this theory has been enriched by Thomas Aquinas with the idea of a mystical connection of Christ with all people (in order to emphasize Christ's love as the basis of salvation), and with the idea of a superabundant satisfaction (which emphasizes the infinite merit of sacrifice.)¹⁰³

For the Orthodox, the Catholic idea that Christ's sacrifice was called by God to repair his honour remains unacceptable, as it can be suspected of Arianism and medievalism. In fact, this view of God comes very close to Arius's dilemma: how a majestic God can accept to be humiliated by a puny creature. To the Orthodox, the Catholic view does in fact shift the paradigm, by presenting God in the image of an emotional man.

One could easily think of God through the paradigm of a medieval lord, who, whenever offended, his concern is to preserve or restore his honor either by receiving satisfaction, or by punishing the offender unconditionally. Indeed, the early Christians believed that salvation can only be obtained through sacrifice, but this is not a sacrifice conducted out of legal premises. Tertullian borrowed terminology from the Roman jurisprudence more as a mimetic expression, particularly when he shames Marcion's idolatry, because, in fact, his goal was to advocate the belief in a compassionate God.

"And justly did He humble Himself for His own creature man," writes Tertullian, "for the image and likeness of Himself, and not of another, in order that man, since he had not felt ashamed when bowing down to a stone or a stock, might with similar courage give satisfaction to God for the shamelessness of his idolatry, by displaying an equal degree of shamelessness in his faith, in not being ashamed of Christ. Now, Marcion, which of these courses is better suited to your Christ, in respect of a meritorious shame? Plainly, you ought yourself to blush with shame for having given him a fictitious existence."¹⁰⁴

What characterizes the Catholic concept is the legalistic spirit.¹⁰⁵ Cold and distant from humanity, the portrayal of Christ contradicts in fact the accounts of the Gospels. It

¹⁰³ Ralph McInerny, ed. *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 1999), 53–95.

¹⁰⁴ Tertullian, *Against Marcion Book 4*, trans. Holmes, in *ANF Vol. 3* eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 382.

¹⁰⁵ John L. Gilin, "A Contribution to the Sociology of Sects," *American Journal of Sociology* 16, no. 2 (1910): 236–252.

also contradicts the early Christian view of Christ's sacrifice as an act of sanctifying and deifying the world.

4.3.1.1.4.2 Protestant Considerations on the Original Sin

The classic Protestant theology of redemption or reconciliation focuses on Christ as the scapegoat who absorbs the wrath of the Father.¹⁰⁶ For the Protestant mind, the original sin destroyed the *imago dei*. It did not remove it as the Catholics believe—since for the Catholics the *imago dei* was part of *dona speraddita* removed with the original sin.

Just for the sake of exemplification, Martin Luther, in his *Treatise on Good Works*, considers that even after Baptism, the man is victim of the original sin, and that the original sin can never be removed completely.

“For original sin is born in us by nature, and may be checked, but not entirely uprooted, except through the death of the body; which for this reason is profitable and a thing to be desired.”¹⁰⁷

This is because, in his theology of the cross,¹⁰⁸ Martin Luther seems to link closely the objective salvation (granted to the entire humanity), with its subjective meaning through personal faith.¹⁰⁹ Christ's fight to save Adam's posterity was repeated constantly in faith, not as an objective reality, but as subjective effort of each individual.

Luther's theology was further developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher. As the Christological doctrine stays at the heart of Christian theology, the work of Schleiermacher is “Christo-morphic;” to use Richard R. Niebuhr observation.¹¹⁰ According to one of his interpreters, in exploring the Person and the work of Christ,

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Mark Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

¹⁰⁷ Martin Luther, *Works of Martin Luther, Vol. 1* (Albany, OR: Books for the Ages, 1997), 223.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, “The ‘Crucified God’ A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross,” *Union Seminary Review* 26, no. 3 (1972): 278–299.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Theology of the Cross,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (2002): 443–466.

¹¹⁰ Jacqueline Mariña, “Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 151–170 (here 151).

Schleiermacher focuses on redemption through Christ as a starting point. Therefore, Christ ought to be both like us and unlike us. As Jacqueline Mariña observes,

“If Jesus is to be the redeemer, two conditions must be met. First, he must be *like* us, that is, he must have a nature essentially like our own. Second, he must not himself stand in need of redemption, and he must have the requisite power to save those that need redemption. In this regard he must be *unlike* us.”¹¹¹

Schleiermacher’s account of sin is revisionist in the sense that he recognizes the internal difficulties of the traditional doctrine of the Fall of Adam and Eve since the original sin makes one guilty by virtue of something that arrived from an external source.¹¹² Yet, his theology is based on the irreparable corruption of human nature by sin. It does not take into account the communion with God, who deified the human nature so that humanity can partake from the divinity. This is so, apparently due to a juridical interpretation of the atoning sacrifice that failed to change human nature. This failure can be explained by looking into the premises of the two theologies.

4.3.1.1.4.3 *Orthodox Perceptions of the Protestant Position on the Original Sin*

As the Orthodox theology claims to be the faithful steward of the early Christian thought, it does credit the Protestant thesis that sin represents an inner compromise of the human being that calls for salvation. However, in the view of the Orthodox, the classic Protestant theology had exaggerated the consequences of the original sin upon human nature, perhaps in its attempts to oppose the Catholic perspective.

As Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean wrote in their *Dogmatic Theology*, there are seven problems with the Protestant view on the consequence of the original sin.

The first problem is related to the continuity of natural and supernatural revelation in the aftermath of the original sin.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 152.

¹¹² Walter E Wyman, Jr., “Sin and Redemption,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 129–150 (here 134.)

“Through the original sin, people did not lose completely the consciousness of God and the understanding of spiritual realities, since there is also a natural revelation. Even the pagans may, to some extent, know God. (Rom. 1: 19–20).”¹¹³

Second, human freedom exists after Adam and Eve lost their paradise:

“The original sin did not destroy human freedom, but only diminished it. For if the sin had destroyed it, then God’s commands, the counsels, the promises and the threats would be pointless without the existence of moral freedom. (Exod. 20: 3 ff)”¹¹⁴

Third, God’s image in man survived the original sin:

“Sin never fully destroyed the image of God in man. (Gen. 9: 6)”¹¹⁵

Fourth, any good work of anyone who lived prior to Christ had been rewarded by God.

“The good works of the natural man, who fell under the sin, the good works of the heathen are indeed good: Egyptian midwives who did not kill at birth the children of the Israelites were rewarded by God. (Exod. 1:20) . . . The good works of those who were not yet born through Baptism, that is the good works of the pagans, without being acts of virtues, are not to be considered “splendida vitia,” as Blessed Augustine claims, because there are meritorious deeds for those who only have the natural moral law, which is yet again another evidence of God’s image in the one who commits them.”¹¹⁶

Fifth, the moral consciousness in man that remained after the original sin makes him responsible for the evil he commits.

“The possibility of a complete spiritual corruption of the man after the original sin, leads to the absurd conclusion that man is just a powerless ruin lacking any power to recover, and as such, evil becomes substantial nature after sin, that is from Adam to Christ, nor would there be a sin, since man commits evil mechanically and without freedom.”¹¹⁷

Sixth, no judge punishes anyone who is mentally ill. Therefore, it would be unfair to punish the man who is unable to commit the good, since such a man lacks the necessary freedom and integrity to do so.

“As a consequence of the above points, if human nature itself became bad after sin, man could no longer do anything except evil; it is totally unfair for man to be punished, since the evil that he commits is not the product of his free will.”¹¹⁸

Seventh, the survival of the original revelation is visible beyond Christianity in the consciousness and the search for God that exists in other world religions.

¹¹³ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 193.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 194.

“History of religions strengthens and confirms the truth that following the original sin, man never completely lost the knowledge of God and his ability to do good.”¹¹⁹

As a conclusion to the Orthodox position on this inter-confessional excursus, on the perception of the Original Sin, one can summarize the debates in the following way. For the Roman Catholic, after the original sin was committed, there is nothing to repair in the human nature because only the supernatural grace was lost; a grace which was external to human nature from creation. For the Protestant, because nothing can be fixed in the human nature after the original sin, humanity remains as depraved as before. To the Roman Catholics and to the Protestants alike, Christ is the only one who fulfills the law for the entire mankind, while remaining somewhat outside of it.

4.3.2 Justification by Faith and Salvation

4.3.2.1 Defining the Justifier/Saviour

Waggoner defines the Justifier as in the human ability to identify divinity and recognize it as such.

“This ‘lifting up’ of Jesus, while it has primary reference to His crucifixion, embraces more than the mere historical fact; it means that Christ must be ‘lifted up’ by all who believe in Him, as the crucified Redeemer, whose grace and glory are sufficient to supply the world’s greatest need; it means that He should be ‘lifted up’ in all His exceeding loveliness and power as ‘God with us,’ that His Divine attractiveness may thus draw all unto Him. See John 12:32.”¹²⁰

When called a “Good Master” by the young man, and Jesus asked him why he was calling him good, Waggoner attests that Christ’s question was rhetorical in the sense of raising awareness in the consciousness of the young man asking the question. This is so also because,

“Christ cannot deny Himself, therefore He could not say that He was not good. He is and was absolutely good, the perfection of goodness. And since there is none good but God, and Christ is good, it follows that Christ is God, and that this is what He meant to teach the young man.”¹²¹

4.3.2.2 Preparation of Humanity for a Justifier/Saviour and Salvation

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 6.

¹²¹ Ibid., 14.

The early Christians considered themselves to be the privileged generation that benefited from the fulfillment of the Protoevangelion.¹²² Why would they be the chosen generation?¹²³ In fact, each generation longed to be the chosen one—a longing that rests at the heart of Millennialism.¹²⁴

As direct recipients of God's promise, the early Christians needed more understanding of their unique privilege. They sought this explanation in reading the Gospels, Paul's letters, as well as the Old Testament prophecies, of course in addition to their efforts for making sense of their own spiritual environment.¹²⁵

Paul's *Letter to the Galatians* gave them a clue by noting that "when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law." (Gal. 4:4) This text begged the question for additional clues and evidence to explain why their generation was privileged to be the one benefitting from the manifestation of the fullness of time. A cardinal reading of this text revealed the hidden message of a process of preparation, as implied by the text, "when the set time had *fully* come."¹²⁶ Was this the fulfillment of the long-awaited Protoevangelion? Did their suffering call for a Savior who would bring justice and restore relationships? Looking deeper into the meaning of some enigmatic passages from the Old Testament, the apparently instrumental memory of the Protoevangelium was periodically refreshed in preparation for the arrival of the Savior.¹²⁷ The positive reaffirmation of the prophecies, as well as the devastating consciousness of guilt and sin represented parallel venues that emphasized the necessity

¹²² Mary B. Cunningham and Pauline Allen, "The Use of the Protoevangelion of James in Eighth-Century Homilies on the Mother of God," *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium: Texts and Images*, eds. Leslie Brubaker and Mary B. Cunningham (London: Routledge, 2016), 163–78.

¹²³ Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2003. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

¹²⁴ Sharon Linzey Wilcox Clyde and Ted G. Jelen, "Reluctant warriors: Premillennialism and Politics in the Moral Majority," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (1991): 245–258.

¹²⁵ Cf. Reuven Firestone, *Who Are the Real Chosen People? The Meaning of Chosenness in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Nashville: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2008. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

¹²⁶ Cf. David Cook, "The Prescript as Programme in Galatians," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 43, no. 2 (1992): 511–519.

¹²⁷ Cf. Timothy J. Horner, "Jewish Aspects of the Protoevangelium of James," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12, no. 3 (2004): 313–335.

of a divine intervention.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the preparation of humanity for a Savior occurred in a more obscure fashion through the gentiles who—even if incompletely—have preserved subconsciously the seed of the Protoevangelium. The pagans themselves were waiting for the Savior, even if the Hindus called this Savior, *Krishnā* (a.k.a. Draupadī),¹²⁹ or the Egyptian called him *Horus*, or the Greeks called him *Prometheus*, or the Muslims called him al-Mahdi (the hidden imam).¹³⁰

As Blaise Pascal, reflected centuries later,

“The Egyptians were infected both with idolatry and magic; the very people of God were led astray by their example. Yet Moses and others believed Him whom they saw not, and worshipped Him, looking to the eternal gifts which He was preparing for them. The Greeks and Latins then set up false deities; the poets made a hundred different theologies, while the philosophers separated into a thousand different sects; and yet in the heart of Judaea there were always chosen men who foretold the coming of this Messiah, which was known to them alone. He came at length in the fullness of time, and time has since witnessed the birth of so many schisms and heresies, so many political revolutions, so many changes in all things; yet this Church, which worships Him who has always been worshipped, has endured uninterruptedly. It is a wonderful, incomparable, and altogether divine fact that this religion, which has always endured, has always been attacked. It has been a thousand times on the eve of universal destruction, and every time it has been in that state, God has restored it by extraordinary acts of His power.”¹³¹

Even if called by different names, or within various formats of spiritual narratives, the argument is that the need for a Savior was preserved subconsciously as a memory of the Protoevangelium. Regardless what one dares to assume, the pragmatic reality is that all these pagan expectations for a divine Savior made it easy for the Gospel (literally “good news”) to spread the news of salvation.¹³²

4.3.2.2.1 Old Testament Prophecies

For Waggoner, the prophecies of the Old Testament constitute a strong element of certainty with regard to the divinity of Jesus Christ. He makes repeated references to the

¹²⁸ Robert P. Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation: The Theology of Everlasting Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 1996. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

¹²⁹ John Bowker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 293.

¹³⁰ Cf. Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: the Idea of Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism*, Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1981. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

¹³¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 90–91.

¹³² Todoran and Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 207–212.

prophecies; however he chooses only particular elements such as the Birth of Bethlehem, while avoiding to engage prophecies in relation to the timing, birth of a virgin, entrance in Jerusalem, as well as torture and sacrifice on the cross.

As derived from various prophecies from Isaiah and the Book of Psalms, Waggoner writes about Christ as being the one prophesized, and expected by humanity as such.

“Long before Christ’s first advent, the prophet Isaiah spoke these words of comfort to Israel: ‘For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.’ Isa. 9:6. These are not simply the words of Isaiah; they are the words of the Spirit of God. God has, in direct address to the Son, called Him by the same title. In Ps. 45:6 we read these words: ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of Thy kingdom is a right scepter.’ The casual reader might take this to be simply the Psalmist’s ascription of praise to God; but when we turn to the New Testament, we find that it is much more. We find that God the Father is the speaker, and that He is addressing the Son, calling Him God. See Heb. 1:1-8.”¹³³

In terms of the divinity of the Savior, the Old Testament was the most authoritative place to look for clues, and offer an explanation on why the early Christians were so privileged. The Old Testament narratives offered several powerful prophecies about the coming of the Savior,¹³⁴ and by all appearances, Jesus of Nazareth was the One.¹³⁵ These prophecies insisted to illustrate that the Savior will come out of Israel, and gave specific information about the time, the social environment and the place where the Saviour will be born.

First, in the context of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden, God proclaimed the Protoevangelium by telling the Deceiver that He “will put enmity between” the Deceiver “and the woman” (Eve), and between the Deceiver’s “offspring and hers” and that the Savior “will crush” the Deceiver’s “head”, and the Deceiver “will strike His heel.” (Gen. 3:15)

¹³³ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 11.

¹³⁴ Cf. Willem VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word: An Introduction to the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

¹³⁵ Cf. Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007.

Second, Abraham and his lineage received the divine blessing and privilege to be the one to receive and safeguard the promise of salvation, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 12:3)

Third, when Balak the king of the Moabites called the wizard Balaam to curse Israel, Balaam not only refused to curse Israel, but prophesized the coming of the Savior out of Israel saying,

“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the people of Sheth.” (Num. 24:17)

Fourth, the *Book of Psalms* register numerous messianic prophecies; some giving specific information about the life and passions of the Savior.¹³⁶

4.3.2.2.2 *Timing*

Curiously, and perhaps unaware of this particular text, in his Christology, Waggoner does not make any reference to Daniel’s prophecy about the timing of Jesus’s first coming. Daniel’s prophecy describes the social and political environment in which the Saviour will come into the world, and how the Saviour will be received by Israel.

“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place. Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” (Dan. 9:25–27)

It is not the purpose of this chapter to extrapolate upon this prophecy, beyond underlining perhaps the remarkable precision in which Daniel’s prophecies were later confirmed by the historical events of Roman occupation of Israel. This prophecy is one

¹³⁶ Cf. Joseph L. Trafton, “The Psalms of Solomon in Recent Research,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 6, no. 12 (1994): 3–19.

of central prophecies that stirred the imagination of Seventh-day Adventist theologians.¹³⁷

4.3.2.2.3 *Birth of Bethlehem*

On repeated occasions, particularly in reference to the kenotic principle, Waggoner recognizes Christ's Birth of Bethlehem as having been prophesized and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

"The Word was 'in the beginning.' The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase. It is not given to men to know when or how the Son was begotten; but we know that He was the Divine Word, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created. Just before His crucifixion He prayed, 'And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.' John 17:5. And more than seven hundred years before His first advent, His coming was thus foretold by the word of inspiration: 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.' Micah 5:2, margin. We know that Christ 'proceeded forth and came from God' (John 8:42), but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man."¹³⁸

More specifically, Prophet Micah foretold that the Savior will be born in Bethlehem¹³⁹ at a time when Israel will be under foreign occupation.

"Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites." (Mic. 5:1–3)

Apart for its prophetic value, the hidden message might have also resonated with the early Christian's mind—on the dilemma *why God becomes man*—as a shifting paradigm of social structure and worth. In other words, if Bethlehem, which was small among the clans of Israel, became the birthplace of the incarnated God, so was their arguably feeble generation chosen to be the privileged beneficiary of salvation.

¹³⁷ See for example, Brempong Owusu-Antwi, "The Chronology of Daniel 9: 24–27," *Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 2* (1995). See also Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (First Edition) Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987; Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile*, Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing, 2000. (This entire work is constructed to prove this argument, and it is to be consulted in its entirety.)

¹³⁸ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 9.

¹³⁹ A quite provoking study that draws parallels between science, theology and history was written by D'Occhieppo Konradin Ferrari, "The Star of Bethlehem (Correspondence)," *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society* 19 (1978): 517.

4.3.2.2.4 *Birth of a Virgin*

Jesus's birth of a Virgin has been another major clue that was prophesized by Isaiah, and fulfilled into the person of Jesus Christ.

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isa. 7:14)

This text has been pivotal in the Christian interpretation for centuries, giving birth to various debates.¹⁴⁰ In line with these debates, Waggoner apparently avoids giving any references, fearing perhaps a possible discrediting of his Trinitarian argument by his theological opponents. Waggoner neither affirms, nor disputes this prophecy. However, today, the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that Jesus Christ was born from *Virgin Mary*.

4.3.2.2.5 *Entrance in Jerusalem*

That Jesus Christ was not a political Messiah was clear from Zechariah's prophecy who foresaw Jesus's peaceful entrance in Jerusalem, by riding on a donkey.¹⁴¹

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zech. 9:9)

This text also brings into the open the political aspects of Christianity as an alleged, religion of peace; by analogy with the Jewish Expectations for a political Messiah.

4.3.2.2.6 *Torture and Sacrifice on the Cross*

Prophet Isaiah foretold the Savior's suffering, torture and death on the cross for the sins of mankind, yet without him retaliating.

¹⁴⁰ Herbert M. Wolf, “A Solution to the Immanuel Prophecy in Isaiah 7:14–8:22,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, no. 4 (1972): 449–456.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Heather Murray Elkins, “The Paradox of Passion and Palms,” *Journal of the Liturgical Conference*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1995): 42–45.

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression[a] and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.” (Isa. 53: 3–8)

In light of his prophecy, Waggoner yet again, is careful in what he chooses to emphasize, in Jesus Christ. This is perhaps because, by emphasizing too much the human aspects he could have taken the risk of reducing the strength of his argument of Christ’s divinity.

Nevertheless, in light of various signposts chosen by Waggoner, it is obvious that the idea he emphasizes is that God himself becomes a man to save the world.

Mankind is prepared for the Savior through the Protoevangelion which is preserved through the Chosen People—elected because of Abraham’s virtue to preserve the primordial revelation uncompromised. The promise of salvation is renewed through various prophecies that gave specific information with regard to the time, place, birth of a virgin, all pointing to Jesus Christ who will hold a threefold office as prophet, priest, and king.

Bringing, Waggoner’s Christology to a closure, as far as he made it available in his post-1888 work, *Christ and His Righteousness*, one can observe how Waggoner’s Christology runs parallel with the Orthodox Christology. It is also obvious that Waggoner was not influenced by the Orthodox, and the only Catholic elements of faith that he was aware of, as he authored the book *Fathers of the Catholic Church*, he rejected. He also repudiated anything that he found unjustified through his way of interpreting the scripture.

Similar to the Orthodox doctrine, for Waggoner, Jesus shares in the divinity of the Godhead through the quality of being Creator, as derived from the Gospel of John.

“He made everything that can be seen, and everything that cannot be seen; the thrones and dominions, and the principalities and the powers in heaven, all depend upon Him for existence. And as He is before all things, and their Creator, so by Him do all things consist or hold together. This is equivalent to what is said in Heb. 1:3, that He upholds all things by the word of His power. It was by a word that the heavens were made; and that same word holds them in their place, and preserves them from destruction. [. . .] One more statement concerning Christ as Creator must suffice. It is the testimony of the Father Himself.”¹⁴²

Regarding the relationship between the Godhead and the Son, Waggoner makes a plain Nicene creedal statement,

“The Scriptures declare that Christ is ‘the only begotten son of God.’ He is begotten, not created. As to when He was begotten, it is not for us to inquire, nor could our minds grasp it if we were told.”¹⁴³

The relationship of equality between the Father and the Son is further emphasized by Waggoner when he explains that the power of the Son by no means diminishes the power of the Father.

“It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and therefore the Father is not relegated to a secondary position, as some imagine, when Christ is exalted as Creator and Lawgiver; for the glory of the Father shines through the Son. Since God is known only through Christ, it is evident that the Father cannot be honored as He ought to be honored, by those who do not exalt Christ. As Christ Himself said, ‘He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him.’ John 5:23.”¹⁴⁴

At the same time, a strong argument against Arianism is offered by Waggoner when stating that:

“Here we find the Father addressing the Son as God, and saying to Him, Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. When the Father Himself gives this honor to the Son, what is man, that he should withhold it? With this we may well leave the direct testimony concerning the Divinity of Christ and the fact that He is the Creator of all things.”¹⁴⁵

As for the semi-Arians Waggoner recommends that,

“we must dwell for a few moments upon an opinion that is honestly held by many who would not for any consideration willingly dishonor Christ, but who, through that opinion, do actually deny His Divinity. It is the idea that Christ is a created being, who, through the good pleasure of God, was elevated to His present lofty position. No one who holds this

¹⁴² Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 17–18.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 18–19.

view can possibly have any just conception of the exalted position which Christ really occupies.”¹⁴⁶

In reference to various misconceptions about Christ’s divinity, which the theologians of his time derived from reading Revelation 3:14, Waggoner considered that these views,

“antagonize the scripture which declares that Christ Himself created all things. To say that God began His work of creation by creating Christ is to leave Christ entirely out of the work of creation.”¹⁴⁷

This is because,

“Christ is the commander of the angels. See Rev. 19:19-14. He created the angels. Col. 1:16. [. . .] in Him creation had its beginning; that, as He Himself says, He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Rev. 21:6; 22:13. He is the source whence all things have their origin.”¹⁴⁸

4.3.3 Waggoner’s view of the Holy Spirit

Waggoner’s Pneumatology is explored in a minimalist fashion. Understood in the classical way—whereby the Holy Spirit is of one essence with the Father and the Son—all references to the Holy Spirit are sparse, and when they do appear they are minimalist and ambiguous, such as in the text below:

“Finally, we know the Divine unity of the Father and the Son from the fact that both have the same Spirit.”¹⁴⁹

Nevertheless, whenever Waggoner alludes to the Holy Spirit, his inferences are in complete agreement with the traditional Trinitarian doctrine. As Waggoner describes the divine action,

“The Spirit strives with all men. It comes as a reprover; when its voice of reproof is regarded, then it at once assumes the office of comforter. The same submissive, yielding disposition that leads the person to accept the reproof of the Spirit, will also lead him to follow the teachings of the Spirit, and Paul says that ‘as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’ Rom. 8:14.” (*Christ and His Righteousness*, page 67)

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 19–20.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 20–21.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 23.

Given the contents of Waggoner's Christology and the context in which I presented the argument, this presentation can serve as a future basis for conversation, dialogue and ecumenical exchanges with Orthodox Christianity.

4.4 Conclusions

In concluding this chapter I should first underline that the argument was presented as a bridge toward the secondary set of questions explored by this thesis. By focussing exclusively on Dr. Ellet J Waggoner's writings, I concluded that his adoption of Trinitarian Christology, appears to have been derived from his own understanding of the doctrine of justification. As it appears, Waggoner's doctrine of justification served as a stepping stone toward the new conclusions he reached from studying the Scripture; conclusions which led him to the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology.

Waggoner's logic indicated that only a Saviour who is God Himself is willing and able to erase the sin completely. In Waggoner's view, it was not the echelon of justification (as conditioned by the nature of the original sin) that set the bar for humanity to receive a Justifier of a specific rank, but it was God's providence and love for humanity that granted salvation and immortality. This is because the power of the original sin does not determine the act of salvation. On the contrary, God's love for humanity determines the nature of salvation through human faith.

With Waggoner's Trinitarian Christology clarified on a dogmatic platform, I shifted toward the secondary cluster of questions which I engaged from the perspective of political theology and comparative dogmatics, by setting the stage of inter-confessional considerations. The structure of Waggoner's Christology was further analyzed from a comparative explanatory platform, anchored into an Orthodox frame of reference. In line with the Justifier's intention proclaimed as divine providence in the

Protoevangelium, I further scrutinized Waggoner's Christology on the questions of freedom, evil, sin, punishment, justification and salvation.

As this chapter concluded (in a relative concurrence with the Orthodox platform), Waggoner's Christology was built through an analytic sequence of Old Testament prophecies—that prepared the humanity for the arrival of the Saviour—as well as through New Testament references which confirm the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies about God becoming human.

Nevertheless, Waggoner's understanding of the relation between the divine and human will was not analyzed. I will do so in the next chapter where I will focus on the questions of *how God became man*, and *how the two natures of Jesus Christ (divine and human) are interrelated in the Person of Christ*. This analysis will be developed as a case study which will be fully immersed into Adventist—Orthodox comparative Christology.

Chapter 5

Waggoner and Stăniloae: A Case Study no Comparative Christology and the Potential for Dialogue between Adventism and Eastern Christianity

5.1 The Potential for Dialog with Eastern Christianity

This chapter continues the comparative Christological analysis commenced by the previous chapter by focusing exclusively on Waggoner (on the Adventist side) and Stăniloae (on the Orthodox). The main themes of Christological analysis will include the doctrines of kenosis and hypostatic union. Furthermore, this chapter will underscore the strong potential for a meaningful Christological dialogue between Adventism and Eastern Christianity; while recognizing its contextual limitation to the Romanian setting, along with a potential cultural bias (given the author's background).

One fundamental question may be raised on this occasion:

Is Adventist Christology ready for dialogue?

Is it sufficiently mature and seasoned for such an undertaking?

My definite answer is yes.

Adventist theology is seasoned enough to enter a most sincere dialogue. And, what I mean by using the adjective 'seasoned' is my personal assessment of the Adventist theology, as having been able to demonstrate a consistent discourse on Christology. Indeed, as an overall theological assessment of Adventist theology, this adjective may be premature, considering its limited historical trail, when compared with the trail left by Catholicism or by Eastern Orthodoxy. The adjective 'seasoned' is used rather metaphorically, in order to recognize that the Adventist biblical reflection went far beyond simplicity, and earned its particular 'flavour'. It is its flavour which may attract the curiosity of Christian theologians from outside Adventism, particularly for the way Christology with historiography are contextualized and overlapped. It is also

seasoned because it may be suitable for inspiring new ideas, and new perspectives on Christology. As it passed the internal stress-test, Adventist Christology gained experience to arrive, by its own means, to conclusions about the Trinity which are similar to those reached during early Christian debates, yet not being conditioned by these. Last but not least, E. J. Waggoner's Christological findings, by using a logic anchored in divine sacrificial love, makes his theology 'seasoned' for its potential to attract the attention of prolific theologians from outside Adventism.

As it will be demonstrated in spite of lack of mutual Christological influence (as the chapter compares two theologians from two cultural contexts and centuries, isolated by time and historical circumstances), both Waggoner and Stăniloae wrestled with a similar set of spiritual propositions, while their use of the authority of the scripture unto itself was almost identical.

From the outset, it must be clarified that there is nothing such as "official" or institutional dialogue between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church. This is because, in Romania, as everywhere else, the question of SDA participation in ecumenical dialogue¹ has remained an issue yet to be defined and clarified internally.² As demonstrated by the previous chapters, SDA Church finds itself in a continuous dogmatic development,³ and as such, entering into an official dialogue at an institutional level may be premature indeed. Nevertheless, this does not mean that conversations between members of SDA Church and members of the Romanian Orthodox Church failed to take place. On the contrary, such conversations took place in

¹ For various statements on interfaith relations, one may consult a remarkable collection of documents issued by SDA Church which had been compiled by Ștefan Höschele. See, Ștefan Höschele, *Interchurch and Interfaith Relations: Seventh-Day Adventist Statements and Documents*. Vol. 10. Bern: Peter Lang, 2010. (For purpose of clarification and comprehensive overview, one may consider this volume in its entirety.)

² Bert Beverly Beach, *Seventh-Day Adventists and the Ecumenical Movement*, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985. (For purpose of clarification and comprehensive overview, one may consider this volume in its entirety.)

³ George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: the Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Beliefs*, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000. (For purpose of clarification and comprehensive overview, one may consider this volume in its entirety.)

the context of missionary work conducted by the SDA Church, as well as within various regional working groups within the World Council of Churches; conversations which do not make the scope of this dissertation to be analyzed.

Driven by missionary zeal, theological conversations took place continuously between SDA and members of the Orthodox Church and culture in the context and during the process of evangelization. Unfortunately, such conversations were and still are dominated by mutual suspicion, as the manner in which these are conducted resemble a diatribe rather than a dialogue. On the part of SDA Church, the subjects of conversation had been focused on specific topics geared toward conversion, and were somewhat simplistic. They were simplistic for the very reason that the evangelical message had to be presented in such a way as to be understood by everyone, as the SDA Church welcomed everyone into the community regardless of education, social status, and wealth.

From the Orthodox side, however, the subjects of discussion were not only unsophisticated and usually dominated by a sense of dismissal, but they were also shielded by an attitude of defense, and usually yielded into labeling the interlocutor as heretic.

Nevertheless, the strongest practical impact of such conversations was on the necessity of differentiation, and this was usually visible on the devotional arena by the observance of the Sabbath. At the same time, the intent of differentiation through the Sabbath maintained a clear-cut delimitation between the old and the new faith, and established the SDA Church as a well defined institution.

5.1.1 Geopolitical Context: Politics, Persecution, Dialog

The geopolitical context in which the SDA Church operated has been a turbulent one, as its members faced various forms of discrimination from other Christians⁴—mainly due to a lack of conformity with the mores of the dominant religious culture; being set apart by its observance of the Sabbath on Saturday—as well as from non-Christians, from secularists,⁵ and from atheists.⁶

In Romania, during the brutal years of Communist totalitarianism, SDA Church faced various forms of persecution; perhaps in a higher proportion than other religions (if one is to regard it per capita), as it has openly challenged the political regime by refusing to work, or go to school on Saturdays, as well as by the appeal to their human right of conscientious objection when drafted into the military.

With Romania becoming subject to Soviet control at the end of World War II, in 1947, the Ministry of Cults demanded SDA Church to renounce the Sabbath and modify its statute which, in Article 5, it declared the following:

“we respect as day of rest, the day of Saturday, when we neither do school, nor military exercises, but we only intervene in cases that demand saving one's life. We serve in the army as noncombatant soldiers and only in conformity to our principles, and at our request, that is whatever our conscience permits us.”

By refusing to do so, the SDA became the target of severe persecution.⁷ Therefore, such was the environment in which SDA conducted its missionary work.

However, insofar as my own experience counts as evidence, it was in the prison where some of the most profound theological conversation took place between the Adventists and the Orthodox, as well as between the Adventists and members of various

⁴ Malcolm Bull, “The Seventh-day Adventists: Heretics of American Civil Religion,” *Sociology of Religion* 50, no. 2 (1989): 177–187.

⁵ Ronald Lawson, “Sect-State Relations: Accounting for the Differing Trajectories of Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses,” *Sociology of Religion* 56, no. 4 (1995): 351–377.

⁶ Sebastien Peyrouse, “The relationship Between Church and State in the Post-Soviet World: the Case of Christianity in Central Asia,” *Journal of Church and State* 49 (2007): 97.

⁷ Cf. *Vis de Libertate* (Dreaming of Freedom) Documentary June 24, 2012, accessed on March 12, 2017, <http://www.azsmr.ro/documentar-vis-de-libertate/>

Churches going through the same ordeal. It was an honest and heartfelt dialogue, full of reverence and mutual regard.

5.1.2 Regional Prospects for Dialog

Usually driven by the context, dialogue can develop in a meaningful way if anchored into the local experience of life.

Regional prospects for dialogue arise from two elements: freedom of religion, and the process of an organic theological solidarity with the local religious culture by grafting the SDA's evangelical message into the local system of meaning. To this extent, the SDA Church has a proven record of advocating freedom of religion and conscience. This advocacy not only helps the SDA Church itself, but it also helps its efforts to create coalitions with other religious minorities in finding a common cause to support freedom of religion.

In fact, one of the strongest venues of advocacy for freedom of religion around the world is performed by the International Religious Liberty Association in 1893, which was originally chartered by the SDA Church in 1893 with the purpose of promoting religious freedom for all people and everywhere.⁸

At the same time, by grafting the message of salvation into the local system of meaning and religious culture (as defined by the Gospel in resonance with the core moral principles of Adventism), not only will the SDA Church continue its global diversification, but it will become more inclusive of facilitating the good news of salvation and bring the hope of Christ's return to all nations.

5.1.3 Focus on Similarities as a Strategy

In order to underscore the potential of such theological dialogue between SDA Church and Eastern Christianity this chapter will compare and contrast two theologians, Ellet J.

⁸ For details about the history and the current activity of the International Religious Liberty Association, visit its official website at <https://www.irla.org/about-the-irla>

Waggoner and Dumitru Stăniloae, who shared a common Christological view, without even being aware of each other or influencing each other. By exploring such similarities, one will be enabled to underscore the organic theological essence that exists between the two churches, and promote relations of mutual respect.

It is also important to focus on theological similarities because differences have a proven record of fuelling not only theological diatribe, but also interfaith conflict.

Today, global religious conflicts, which involve Christianity to a large extent, not only represent a plague of humanity, and runs contrary to what Jesus Christ taught and did, but, as any conflict, runs contrary to God's message of forgiveness and reconciliation.

5.2 Waggoner and Stăniloae on the Value of Humanity

In appraising the commonality of thinking between Ellet J. Waggoner and Dumitru Stăniloae one can state with certainty that they both recognize the prominent significance of humanity which, merits the price of divine intervention through sacrifice.

It is important to underscore that within the process of appraisal, Waggoner does not advocate any form of predestination that would separate humanity between the elected and the doomed. He rather portrays the man as an entity unto itself, entitled to salvation simply by the fact that man was created in God's image, and as such has an outstanding value in God's eyes.

This appraisal of man's significance is also proven by the fact that God Himself chooses to adopt the human nature through the incarnation of the Son, and as such, the human body becomes a de facto temple of the Holy Spirit. As Waggoner writes,

“[m]any people hesitate to make a start to serve the Lord, because they fear that God will not accept them; and thousands who have been professed followers of Christ for years are

still doubting their acceptance with God. For the benefit of such I write, and I would not bewilder their minds with speculations, but will endeavor to give them the simple assurances of God's word. [. . .] In the first place, He has bought us. 'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price.' 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. The price that was paid for us was His own blood—His life."⁹

For Waggoner, the empowerment that man receives not only alters, but goes beyond the simplicity of the JBF paradigm. It is the expression and the execution of divine love which surpasses by far any human intention, regardless of how significant or insignificant that might be. Waggoner does so in an effort to underscore the significance of the human being which surpasses any wrongdoing of sin.

The outlook on sacrifice, through which Waggoner presents his own Christology, is similar to if not straightforwardly mirrored by what Stăniloae calls attention to when he differentiates between the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and the ultimate Sacrifice of the True Lamb. As Stăniloae writes,

"If through the law, Isaac, who represented all the descendants of Abraham, escaped death for a while through an animal 'lamb', now the True Lamb, representing the entire humanity, liberates everyone from the definite death, especially because He is not subjected to death by sin, being God who became man. His Sacrifice now genuinely gratifies God, and represents all people by drawing them to Him, while on the other hand, this sacrifice is the sacrifice of the Son to the Almighty and loving Father. It is, therefore, the sacrifice of offering that saves humanity from the eternal death, while causing eternal life, as this is a sacrifice brought by the Son to the Father in heaven. Through this, the justifying sacrifice of Christ is an offering full of light, or brings the light of God to the entire humanity. In Christ we can see that man is not a meaningless product of nature, but man is brought into existence by God, to be saved by God after man's fall, for it is through Him that the Person of the Son of God is being identified. Man is restored to eternal life through the sacrifice offered to God by the Son of God Himself, which is, at the same time, the human sacrifice being made by the son, and brought before the Father."¹⁰

Therefore, the commonality between Waggoner and Stăniloae is evident on the question of man's value, which is worth the divine sacrifice.

⁹ Ellet J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Clarksville, AR: Pathway Publishers, 1978), 69–70.

¹⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos Lumina și îndumnezeitorul omului* (București: Editura Anastasia, 1993), 93–94.

5.3 Two Doctrine Defined in Similar Terms: Kenosis and Hypostatic Union

In full resonance with Orthodox Christology, Waggoner's Christology is based on a logic that resonates with the theories of *kenosis* and *hypostatic union* between the two natures of Christ: divine and human.

The central and perhaps the most comprehensive text that displays the embodiment of similarities between Waggoner's Christology and the Orthodox Christian dogmas of kenosis and hypostatic union is presented in his work *Christ and His Righteousness*, where he writes the following:

“One more point, and then we can learn the entire lesson that we should learn from the fact that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ How was it that Christ could be thus ‘compassed with infirmity’ (Heb. 5:2), and still know no sin? Some may have thought, while reading thus far, that we were depreciating the character of Jesus, by bringing Him down to the level of sinful man. On the contrary, we are simply exalting the ‘Divine power’ of our blessed Saviour, who Himself voluntarily descended to the level of sinful man, in order that He might exalt man to His own spotless purity, which He retained under the most adverse circumstances. His humanity only veiled His Divine nature, by which He was inseparably connected with the invisible God, and which was more than able successfully to resist the weaknesses of the flesh. There was in His whole life a struggle. The flesh, moved upon by the enemy of all righteousness, would tend to sin, yet His Divine nature never for a moment harbored an evil desire, nor did His Divine power for a moment waver. Having suffered in the flesh all that men can possibly suffer, He returned to the throne of the Father as spotless as when He left the courts of glory. When He lay in the tomb, under the power of death, ‘it was impossible that He should be holden of it,’ because He ‘knew no sin’.”¹¹

Given its comprehensive structure, this text represents the epicenter of our comparison between Waggoner's Christology and Stăniloae's in order to display the evident similarity between their thinking. The ways in which Waggoner understood the relation between the divine and human nature in Jesus Christ mirrors what the Orthodox Christian dogmatic theology calls the dogmas of *kenosis* and *hypostatic union*.

For purpose of clarity, although there are numerous themes worth of comparison between Waggoner and Stăniloae, this chapter focusses exclusively on Waggoner's Christology—as Waggoner attempts to demonstrate *why* and *how* God becomes man to save the world—measuring his demonstration against the Orthodox dogmas of *kenosis* and *hypostatic union*.

¹¹ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 28–29.

The rationale of the relationship between kenosis and hypostatic union, in understanding the reason behind divine incarnation to save humanity from under the bondage of sin, is the following:

Through kenosis (or ‘self-emptying’), God “poured out” His divine splendor from within Himself to become a human, because He “voluntarily descended to the level of sinful man,” as Waggoner affirms. In doing so, God enabled Himself to convince humanity of His unspeakable love and sacrifice, to sanctify the entire creation and deify the human being or, as Waggoner puts it, “in order that He might exalt man to His own spotless purity, which He retained under the most adverse circumstances.”¹²

He did so by maintaining a perfect (hypostatic) union between the divine nature (or hypostasis), or in Waggoner’s words, God’s “own spotless purity, which He retained under the most adverse circumstances,” and the human nature (or hypostasis), as He “suffered in the flesh all that men can possibly suffer.”¹³

Both natures were embodied into one person, and remained distinct of each other because, as Waggoner explains, “the wonderful story of His humiliation”¹⁴ (which Orthodox Christianity defines as *kenosis*),¹⁵ along with the fact that “His humanity” has “veiled His Divine nature,” is what the Orthodox theology calls *hypostatic union*.¹⁶ Therefore, the unity between the two hypostases unveils the mystery of *how* God becomes man, in order to save and deify humanity, to sanctify and world, and to grant man everlasting life.

Together, the doctrines of kenosis and of hypostatic union make up a logic that provides a “methodology” of salvation by juxtaposing the natural with the supernatural,

¹² Ibid., 28–29.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵ Paul L. Gavriluyk, “The kenotic theology of Sergius Bulgakov,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58, no. 03 (2005): 251–269.

¹⁶ Michael E. Butler, *Hypostatic Union and Monotheletism: The Dyothelite Christology of St. Maximus the Confessor*. PhD Dissertation. New York: Fordham University, 1994. (For purpose of clarification and comprehensive overview, one may consider this dissertation in its entirety.)

the human with the divine, and the temporary with the eternal, in a magnificent paradox. This paradox of kenosis can only be understood—certainly in a limited way—as an expression of enigmatic love that God displays for his beloved creature. In Waggoner’s meditative tone, this puzzling love defeats any establishment of law, and any organic solidarity with the effects of disobedience manifested in punishment, pain and death.

“What a wonderful manifestation of love!” exclaims Waggoner. “The Innocent suffered for the guilty; the Just, for the unjust; the Creator, for the creature; the Maker of the law, for the transgressor against the law; the King, for His rebellious subjects. Since God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all;—since Christ voluntarily gave Himself for us;—how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? Infinite Love could find no greater manifestation of itself. Well may the Lord say, ‘What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?’”¹⁷

It is in this tonality of divine manifestation of unfathomable love that one is enabled to find a possible explanation for “the wonderful story of His humiliation.”

5.3.1 The Doctrine of Kenosis

The descent and the incarnation of the Son of God to save the human race from under the bondage of sin constitute the greatest mystery of the Christian faith.¹⁸ As Timothy wrote in his first letter,

“Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.” (1 Tim. 3:16)

In the history of salvation, the event of kenosis underscores the demonstration of divine love *through meekness* (which emphasizes God’s unexplainable descent to take human form), and *through full regard* for the human being, as the divine and human natures remained unmixed.

The divine hypostasis of Jesus Christ was subjected to the human nature because it became associated with all the pathetic features of the fallen human being, which are alien to God.¹⁹ This is because, as Waggoner puts it, “the flesh, moved upon by the

¹⁷ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 45–46.

¹⁸ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 228.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 229.

enemy of all righteousness, would tend to sin, yet His Divine nature never for a moment harbored an evil desire, nor did His Divine power for a moment waver.”²⁰

The paradox of kenosis consists also in the fact that it displays concomitantly divine *humility*, and divine *power* and *freedom* to manifest Himself in whatever form, because God can do everything He wishes, but does not do everything He can.

As a process, for Stăniloae, kenosis has two stages. The first stage reflects the divine decision and acceptance to empty Himself of his splendor and power. The second stage reflects the history of kenosis itself, which begins with the incarnation of the Son of God, and ends with the death on the cross; time in which the Son assumed human nature in an ontological way.²¹ Similarly, for Waggoner, the union between the divine nature and the human nature becomes confined to history, and both natures were manifested under various circumstances, without one superseding the other.

“No words could more plainly show that Christ was both God and man. Originally only Divine, He took upon Himself human nature, and passed among men as only a common mortal, except at those times when His Divinity flashed through, as on the occasion of the cleansing of the temple, or when His burning words of simple truth forced even His enemies to confess that ‘never man spoke like this man.’ The humiliation which Christ voluntarily took upon Himself is best expressed by Paul to the Philippians.”²²

The human limitations and weaknesses that the Son took upon Himself represented a process adopted in order to bypass weaknesses from within, and give the human body its divine power.²³

Regarded from an exclusively biblical perspective, the anchor text for the doctrine of kenosis is presented by Paul’s letter to the Philippians, where Paul writes:

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing [emptied Himself] by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under

²⁰ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 28–29.

²¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă Vol 2*. Ediția a III-a (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2003), 67.

²² Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 24.

²³ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 229.

the earth, and every tongue acknowledges that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:6–11)

According to the Orthodox theologians, the nuances expressed by the original Greek deserve special attention simply because they offer a more focused picture that helps clarify our dogmatic inquiry. In this text Paul emphasizes that Christ is the subject of kenosis, as the divine-human person, and Son of God. First, the expression ‘emptied’ (Gr. ἐκένωσεν) Himself²⁴ does not imply that Jesus Christ had abandoned His divine nature, but only that he restrained the manifestation of His divine glory. At the same time, the expression ‘nature’ or ‘shape’ of God (μορφῇ θεοῦ) is taken to refer not to the divine essence, but to the glorious manifestation of the divine.²⁵

5.3.1.1 Waggoner’s ‘Avoidance’ of Virgin Mary

During the Early Church there was no doubt on the condition of interpretation, as the majority of Christian writers offered an almost verbatim interpretation of this text, particularly Hilary of Poitiers.²⁶ What the early Christian interpreters have also underscored from the beginning was the role of significance played by Virgin Mary in this process.²⁷ At this point, it is important to note that Waggoner in his work, *Christ*

²⁴ W. Warren, “On ‘eauton ekenosen,’” *Journal of Theological Studies* 12 (1911): 461.

²⁵ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 228–229.

²⁶ As Hilary of Poitiers writes in *On the Trinity*, Book X, chapter 15, Christ’s suffering according to his human nature was real due to union between the divine and human. “But if through His own act He took to Himself flesh from the Virgin, and likewise by His own act joined a soul to the body thus conceived, then the nature of His suffering must have corresponded with the nature of His body and soul. For when He emptied Himself of the form of God and received the form of a servant when the Son of God was born also Son of Man, without losing His own self and power, God the Word formed the perfect living Man. For how was the Son of God born Son of Man, how did He receive the form of a servant, still remaining in the form of God, unless (God the Word being able of Himself to take flesh from the Virgin and to give that flesh a soul, for the redemption of our soul and body), the Man Christ Jesus was born perfect, and made in the form of a servant by the assumption of the body, which the Virgin conceived?” See, Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, trans. E. W. Watson, L. Pullan et al., in *NPNF Vol.9 Second Series*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 185–186.

²⁷ Hilary of Poitiers further notes that Virgin Mary retains a special role, as the relation between the divine nature and human nature remained in concord to each other, without one superseding the other. “For the Virgin conceived, what she conceived, from the Holy Ghost alone, and though for His birth in the flesh she supplied from herself that element, which women always contribute to the seed planted in them, still Jesus Christ was not formed by an ordinary human conception. In His birth, the cause of which was transmitted solely by the Holy Ghost, His mother performed the same part as in all human conceptions: but by virtue of His origin He never ceased to be God.” See, Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*,

and *His Righteousness*, makes no reference to, and gives no opinion about the role played by Virgin Mary. This remains an interesting dilemma on where he stood on this. Writing such a brilliant analysis of Christology, it is curious how Waggoner leaves out this aspect. He could have maintained his position of “absurdity” which he previously stated in his book, *Fathers of The Catholic Church*,²⁸ yet he avoided to do so. Could this be an oversight, or a deliberate act?

Although a mystery, church fathers such as Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus the Confessor, Leontius of Byzantium, and others,²⁹ attempted to explain the logic of kenosis in line with the challenges posed by the Christological debates that led to the call for ecumenical councils.

During the Early Church, the central arguments for kenosis were built around the formation of the Trinitarian doctrine in the context of challenges raised primarily by Arianism and Nestorianism, as well as by additional theological debates that disturbed the harmony of the Early Church.³⁰

It is in a similar vein that Waggoner wrote about kenosis. He wrote in opposition to the Arian tendencies of his time, and in an effort to underscore the divinity of Jesus Christ, the only One who has the disposition, the love and the authority to save humanity. As Waggoner persuaded his readers, he wrote the following:

“Let no one, therefore, who honors Christ at all, give Him less honor than He gives the Father, for this would be to dishonor the Father by just so much; but let all, with the angels in heaven, worship the Son, having no fear that they are worshiping and serving the creature instead of the Creator.”³¹

5.3.1.2 Eight Rationales for Kenosis

trans. E. W. Watson, L. Pullan et al., in *NPNF Vol.9 Second Series*. eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 186.

²⁸ Ellet J. Waggoner, *Fathers of the Catholic Church: A Brief Examination of the “Falling Away” of the Church in the First Three Centuries* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1888), 111, 274, 381.

²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă Vol 2*. Ediția a III-a (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodxe Române, 2003), 66–79.

³⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă Vol 2*. Ediția a III-a (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodxe Române, 2003), 66–79.

³¹ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 24.

As systematized by Todoran and Zăgrean—the contemporary Orthodox theologians from Dumitru Stăniloae’s school—the rationale of kenosis is based on eight considerations such as: 1) *divine love*, 2) *immanence*, 3) *retention of divinity*, 4) *unaltered natures*, 5) *deification*, 6) *divine suffering*, 7) *power in meekness*, and 8) *divine obedience*.

First, in God’s love for humanity, its salvation was not possible from the distance, simply by the power of the word, but by sympathy and empathy with the human nature. As Stăniloae explains, this is because,

“a divine hypostasis, which did not gain its own humanity does not enter into full communion or in a direct dialogue with all men, and therefore does not raise all to the sharing perfect humanity by the divine hypostasis, which is communicated through His humanity. In assuming human nature within the divine hypostasis, the perfect communion is involved between human persons and the divine persons, and between themselves. Making Himself the hypostasis of human nature, the Son of God was made himself the man for the happiness of all, happiness which could not have gained otherwise.”³²

Parallel to Stăniloae’s view, Waggoner stresses the argument of divine immanence as a key act during the process of salvation.

“It was not simply when Christ was sharing the glory of the Father before the world was that He was entitled to homage, but when He came a Babe in Bethlehem, even then all the angels of God were commanded to adore Him.”³³

Second, to make the deification of the human being possible, the Son of God becomes a hypostasis of the human nature. For Waggoner, it is a clear divine intention to bring the human being to a status of deification, because the Son of God has “voluntarily descended to the level of the sinful man, in order that He might exalt the sinful man to His own spotless purity.” In this sense Stăniloae presents a parallel idea as a process of synergy between God’s work and man’s work.

“In coming close to this Person, we make increased progress, advancing on the way of the perfect union of the human nature with the divinity in Him, without ever becoming identical with that target. Christ is our way, helping us to do the same from our own humanity an environment that is increasingly transparent of divinity, just as His human nature is, and a more suitable means for the work of the divinity, just as is in the humanity

³² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Trăirea lui Dumnezeu în Ortodoxie* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1993), 69.

³³ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 14.

assumed by Him, without ever reaching His quality. He is, in other words, the way to our deification by grace.”³⁴

Third, kenosis does not mean that the Son renounced His divine qualities, but adopted and empathized with human struggles. As Waggoner writes in reference to Christ,

“having suffered all that sinful flesh is heir to, He knows all about it, and so closely does He identify Himself with His children that whatever presses upon them makes a like impression upon Him, and He knows how much Divine power is necessary to resist it; and if we but sincerely desire to deny ‘ungodliness and worldly lusts,’ He is able and anxious to give to us strength ‘exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.’ All the power which Christ had dwelling in Him by nature, we may have dwelling in us by grace, for He freely bestows it upon us.”³⁵

Almost parallel to Waggoner, Stăniloae writes that,

“The Son of God being made Subject to flesh, was able to adopt for Himself in a certain way the pain suffered by His body, culminating with nails driven into Him during crucifixion. For I do not think we could say that one hypostasis of Christ was sitting by indifferent to the pain and the suffering of the other hypostasis. And so, He was able to raise the matter of the body above death, He could feel Himself the joy of His own transparency through His resurrected body.”³⁶

Fourth, the two natures of Jesus Christ have preserved their properties unaltered in respect for the human being, and as an expression of divine love.

Fifth, only through kenosis, deification becomes possible. In Waggoner’s case these arguments have already been proven as coinciding not only with Stăniloae’s points, but with the Orthodox theology in general.

Sixth, in the Orthodox understanding, the Son neither becomes pathetic (since only the human nature and person of Christ suffered),³⁷ nor sinful. As Waggoner explains along this same trend of thinking, in the context of the union between divinity and humanity, the human nature of Jesus Christ has remained unaffected by sin.

“Christ was absolutely good. To the Jews, who were continually watching to detect in Him some failing of which they might accuse Him, He boldly said, ‘Which of you convinceth me of sin?’ John 8:46. In the whole Jewish nation not a man could be found who had ever

³⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului*, București: Editura Anastasia, 1993), 71–72.

³⁵ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 30.

³⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost iubirea*, București: Editura Institutului Biblic, 1993), 60.

³⁷ As John of Damascus explains, “Hence it is that the Lord of Glory is said to have been crucified, although His divine nature never endured the Cross, and that the Son of Man is allowed to have been in heaven before the Passion, as the Lord Himself said.” See, John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, trans. S.D.F. Salmond, in *NPNF Vol.9 Second Series*. eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 48.

seen Him do a thing or heard Him utter a word that had even the semblance of evil; and those who were determined to condemn Him could do it only by hiring false witnesses against Him.”³⁸

Seventh, in the Orthodox perception, kenosis reveals the overlapping of the divine meekness with the divine power in defeating death through a sense of “divine deception.”³⁹ For Waggoner, kenosis cannot be treated within the logic of causality, and as a result of human faith, but only as an expression of unconditional love that God has for humanity, which is reflected in the paradox of meekness. As Waggoner wrote,

“It is impossible for us to understand how Christ could, as God, humble Himself to the death of the cross, and it is worse than useless for us to speculate about it. All we can do is to accept the facts as they are presented in the Bible. If the reader finds it difficult to harmonize some of the statements in the Bible concerning the nature of Christ, let him remember that it would be impossible to express it in terms that would enable finite minds to grasp it fully. Just as the grafting of the Gentiles into the stock of Israel is contrary to nature, so much of the Divine economy is a paradox to human understanding.”⁴⁰

Eight, the Son adopted the human nature to make Himself obedient to the Father and redeem Adam’s disobedience.⁴¹ As such, the unexplainable divine obedience that the Son manifested toward the Father was an expression of communion of love within the Trinity, as well as an expression of love for the most beloved creature, which led to the divine sacrifice, and to man’s restoration to the primordial honor. As Waggoner concludes,

“Man’s rebellion is against the Son as much as against the Father, since both are one. Therefore, when Christ ‘gave Himself for our sins,’ it was the King suffering for the rebellious subjects—the One injured passing by, overlooking, the offense of the offender. No skeptic will deny that any man has the right and privilege of pardoning any offense committed against himself; then why cavil when God exercises the same right?”⁴²

In light of all considerations that surfaced within this comparative expose on kenosis, the similarity between the Dumitru Stăniloae’s position (and that of the Orthodox Church in general), and the position taken by Ellet J. Waggoner are strikingly similar, as they both attempt to explain why God takes a human body to save His most

³⁸ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 13.

³⁹ Nicholas P. Conzas, “The Last Temptation of Satan: Divine Deception in Greek Patristic Interpretations of the Passion Narrative,” *Harvard Theological Review* 97, no. 02 (2004): 139–163.

⁴⁰ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 25–26.

⁴¹ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 231–232.

⁴² Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 45–46.

beloved creature. Both theologians are solidly anchored in the text of the Scripture, following a comprehensive logic within the process of explaining the dilemma that Arianism could not find a compromise to. Apparently, the overall approach seems to boil down to the way God is perceived in relation to the human being—a choice between juridical measurability, or love’s immense power which overwhelms and bypasses reason.

5.3.2 The Doctrine of Hypostatic Union

Derivative from the doctrine of kenosis is the doctrine of hypostatic union, which attempts to explain how Jesus Christ is true God and true man, and how He is endowed with two natures (divine and human) united into one person—God the Word.

Simply defined, the union between the divine nature and the human nature in Christ is called *hypostatic union* (Gr. ἕνωσις ὑποστατική).⁴³ Hypostatic union is revealed in the Scripture, in the early Christian writings, in the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, as well as in the writings of the early and late Patristic theologians, who gave this doctrine coherence, clarity, and fixity.⁴⁴

Although not defined in Orthodox terms, the idea of hypostatic union pervades Waggoner’s Christology, and he simply regards it as a paradox and mystery. He neither states anything contrary to it, nor explicitly defines it in the Orthodox fashion; demonstrating yet again that his logical interpretation of Scripture was in concert with the thinking of the participants of the Ecumenical Councils.

Concerning the eternity of Christ as a Person, and the temporality of Christ’s body, Waggoner builds an argument on a similar track as the Orthodox. As he writes,

“If anyone springs the old cavil, how Christ could be immortal and yet die, we have only to say that we do not know. We make no pretensions of fathoming infinity. We cannot understand how Christ could be God in the beginning, sharing equal glory with the Father,

⁴³ Cf. Martin Jugie, “La terminologie christologique de saint Cyrille d’Alexandrie,” *Échos d’Orient* 15, no. 92 (1912): 12–27.

⁴⁴ Jovan Zizijulas, “Mystery of the Church and the Mystery of the Holy Trinity,” *Sabornost* 8 (2014): 43–52.

before the world was, and still be born a babe in Bethlehem. The mystery of the crucifixion and resurrection is but the mystery of the incarnation. We cannot understand how Christ could be God and still become man for our sake. We cannot understand how He could create the world from nothing, nor how He can raise the dead, nor yet how it is that He works by His Spirit in our own hearts; yet we believe and know these things. It should be sufficient for us to accept as true those things which God has revealed, without stumbling over things that the mind of an angel cannot fathom.”⁴⁵

Having the mind of a scientist, Waggoner was more a man of facts than speculation. He knew and acknowledged his speculative limitations, and wherever he could not find a causal mechanism to explain a certain dilemma, he either stated that he did not understand the phenomenon and left it at that, or appealed to the paradox theory.

While Waggoner enlists the biblical data in a narrative format, the Orthodox theologians, Todoran and Zăgrean, appeal more to a cataloging style in giving their own biblical evidence.⁴⁶ As the Orthodox theologians demonstrate, in the Scripture, hypostatic union is expressed by various references such as in John 1:14 (“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”); in Philip 2:7 (“he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness”); in Galatians 4:4 (“God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law”); and in Romans 1:2–3 (“the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David.”)

The union between the divine nature and the human nature is revealed in John 10:30 (“I and the Father are one.”); in Matthew 26:63–64 (“The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.’ ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”); in John 10:15 (“just as the Father knows me and I know the Father”); and in Matthew 8:20 (“Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’”)

⁴⁵ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 22–23.

⁴⁶ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică* 231–234.

Nevertheless, Dumitru Stăniloae explains the hypostatic union in line with the biblical information, as well as in line with the way Scripture has been interpreted during Early Christianity⁴⁷ by the Ecumenical Councils.⁴⁸

In his illustration of the hypostatic union, Stăniloae focuses on the communication between the divine and human, and also on the synergy created between the divine and human as a result of this union following the Incarnation of the Son of God. As Stăniloae explains,

“The Son of God united Himself with humanity at the maximum, or came to a maximum contingency. Now, He no longer remains as a person in a different plane than the rest of the human persons; He is no longer content in making His presence and efficiency felt as a person supporting another rational human person that exists as different from Him, as His image, and as a rationale of things, as different images of His reasons, as He did before the Incarnation, and in a more pronounced and evident way in the Old Testament revelations. He is no longer in a dialogue with the human persons, as a partner from another dimension; His reality as Person is no longer a mystery from another dimension, perceived through an exceptional experience of only some human beings, based on a special Revelation. Now, the Divine Person of the Son of God or the Word enters the common experience of those who believe in Him, as a person from among the human beings, but Who, at the same time, enables them to perceive Him as a divine Person.”⁴⁹

The chief significance of the dogma of hypostatic union consists in the fact that it reveals God’s deep love for creation, and special concern and respect for humanity, particularly with regard to salvation, freedom and integrity. In this sense, with Jesus Christ being the “true God from true God” (Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ)—as stated in the Nicene Creed—He is also the true Savior,⁵⁰ and this understanding is paramount for Waggoner’s overall argument.

⁴⁷ During early Christianity, the hypostatic union was defined in the context of theological debates as well as personal conflicts between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius, as Nestorius challenged the use of Virgin Mary’s title of “Theotokos” (Birth-Giver-of-God), arguing that the title of “Christotokos” (Birth-Giver-of-Christ) was more appropriate. See, Alanah Josey, “Homoousias and Hypostasis: the Christology of John of Damascus,” *Pseudo-Dionysius* 16, no. 1 (2014), 25.

⁴⁸ As defined by John of Damascus in his *Exposition of Orthodox Faith*, long after the controversies ended, “the two natures were united with each other without change or alteration, neither the divine nature departing from its native simplicity, nor yet the human being either changed into the nature of God or reduced to non-existence, nor one compound nature being produced out of the two.” See, John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox*, 46.

⁴⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, Vol. II (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2003), 37.

⁵⁰ The act of salvation is initiated by God, because, as Athanasius of Alexandria explains, “A portrait once effaced must be restored from the original. Thus the Son of the Father came to seek, save, and regenerate. No other way was possible. Blinded himself, man could not see to heal. The witness of

Through hypostatic union, salvation has absolute power and value, since it represents a synergy expressed as a mutual effort coming from God (Christ is God Himself), and as an expression of human effort, since Christ is also man. Salvation, therefore, is a divine-human act, and as such, it involves directly the divine and the human. Hypostatic union represents the sole model of man's spiritual unity with God, as the human will and the divine will had been perfectly united into the person of Christ.⁵¹

The union between the two natures in the Person of Christ occurs through a mutual interpenetration, called *perichoresis* (Gr. Περιχώρησις, 'rotation' from περιχορεύω 'to dance round'), which displays the singularity of the Person and the duality of natures in Jesus Christ; recognizing that neither the divine nature nor the human nature had been altered by the presence of the other.⁵²

Jesus Christ took the entire human nature on all its aspects. The human nature of Christ neither had its own person before incarnation nor after, because it remained constitutive of Jesus Christ for eternity.⁵³ This view is also shared by Waggoner, as he enlists various physical aspects of Christ's body. Nevertheless, he does not mention anywhere if Jesus's body remained a component of the Son of God for eternity, but leaves this question unanswered, and under the veil of mystery, since "the mystery of the crucifixion and resurrection is but the mystery of the incarnation."⁵⁴

creation had failed to preserve him, and could not bring him back. The Word alone could do so. But how? Only by revealing Himself as Man." See, Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, Chapter 14, ed. Archibald Robertson, in *NPNF, Vol. 4 Second Series*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 43.

⁵¹ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 222.

⁵² This expression was initially used by Gregory of Nazianzen and Maximus the Confessor in reference to the relation between the Persons of the Trinity; however it was also used in reference to the relationship between the divine and human hypostases by Gregory of Nazianzen, John of Damascus and others. "The Word appropriates to Himself the attributes of humanity: for all that pertains to His holy flesh is His: and He imparts to the flesh His own attributes by way of communication in virtue of the interpenetration of the parts one with another, and the oneness according to subsistence, and inasmuch as He Who lived and acted both as God and as man, taking to Himself either form and holding intercourse with the other form, was one and the same." See, John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox*, 48.

⁵³ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 223.

⁵⁴ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 23.

Regarding the Triune God, from the Orthodox perspective, it is important to clarify two aspects related to the dogma of hypostatic union:

First, in Jesus Christ, while the entire divine nature was united with the human nature, it was only one person of the Trinity that was incarnated. The Persons of the Trinity are different from one another, and are not to be confused with each other. Therefore, only the Son is incarnated—not the Father and the Holy Spirit—together with the Son, because it was only the Word that “became flesh” (John 1:14), not the entire divinity.⁵⁵

Second, through the incarnation of the Son, no change occurred within the Holy Trinity. The divine nature of the Son did not change by its union with the human nature of Jesus Christ, even though the human nature in Jesus Christ was elevated and perfected. Unlike the Kenosis, which begins with God’s decision to become man, the hypostatic union begins at the concept, and it remains for eternity without change or interruption.⁵⁶ On both accounts, Waggoner’s overall Christology is clearly consonant, as no statements of contradiction appear in his post-1888 work.

5.3.2.1 Dogmatic Consequences from the Orthodox Perspective

From an Orthodox Perspective the hypostatic union in the Person of Jesus Christ had some dogmatic consequences. As Stăniloae explains,

“The unity of the Person of Christ in the two natures has a number of consequences or implications in the sense that not only this union put itself more into the light, but it also reveals more explicitly the soteriologic consequences of the Incarnation of the Word, which are directed first to the assumed human nature, then toward us, through the intimate relationship created between man and God. Through these consequences the work of salvation of Christ is revealed in its basic appearance, pointing to His human nature, as related to His very Person. Christ would not save us if He were to manifest Himself as purely divine, through the attributes and acts of the divine nature toward us, and as purely

⁵⁵ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 224. As John of Damascus clarifies, “In so far as Christ’s natures differ from one another, that is, in the matter of essence, we hold that Christ unites in Himself two extremes: in respect of His divinity He is connected with the Father and the Spirit, while in respect of His humanity He is connected with His mother and all mankind. And in so far as His natures are united, we hold that He differs from the Father and the Spirit on the one hand, and from the mother and the rest of mankind on the other. For the natures are united in His subsistence, having one compound subsistence, in which He differs from the Father and the Spirit, and also from the mother and us.” See, John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox*, 48.

⁵⁶ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 224–5.

human through the qualities and the acts of His human nature. In both cases, He would remain an inaccessible God, so the union of the two natures in His Person would remain unknown and ineffective.”⁵⁷

Orthodox theologians agree on several consequences of hypostatic union, which include the communication of the divine and the human features; deification of human nature and the lack of sin; Christ’s two natures deserving one veneration; Virgin Mary considered Birth-Giver-of-God (Theotokos), and Jesus Christ having two wills and two activities corresponding to the two natures.⁵⁸ Except for the subject of Virgin Mary, all these consequences resonate with Waggoner’s thinking.

a) *Communication of Divine and Human features* / Anchored exclusively on biblical arguments, the communication of features in Jesus Christ refer to the fact that the human features are attributed to the divine nature, and the divine features are attributed to the human nature, without altering any of them. For example as God, Jesus Christ is omnipresent (John 3:13); He forgives the sins (Luke 5:24); He will judge the living and the dead (Matt. 25:31); while as man, Jesus bled (Acts 20:28), suffered (Heb. 5:8), and died on the cross (Rom. 5:10). Therefore, each nature uses the features of the other nature in a theandric mystery.⁵⁹ In this sense, Waggoner writes that as God, Christ had the power to forgive the sins,

“The forgiveness of sins is a reality; it is something tangible, something that vitally affects the individual. It actually clears him from guilt; and if he is cleared from guilt, is justified, made righteous, he has certainly undergone a radical change. He is, indeed, another person. For he obtained this righteousness for the remission of sins, in Christ.”⁶⁰

While as a man, Christ has experienced all human challenges.

“If He was made in all things like unto His brethren, then He must have suffered all the infirmities, and been subject to all the temptations, of His brethren.”⁶¹

Therefore, the recognition of this consequence is implicit.

⁵⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, Vol. II (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2003), 58.

⁵⁸ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 225.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 225–6.

⁶⁰ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 66.

⁶¹ Ibid., 27.

b) Deification of human nature and the lack of sin / Through hypostatic union the human nature receives gifts and powers which bring it to likeness with God, as planned at creation. (Gen. 1:26) However, human nature remains unaltered because it does not receive omnipresence, omniscience, and divine eternal wisdom. (Matt. 24:36; Luke 2:52) While, through hypostatic union, the human wisdom and will remain within the shadow of mystery, human will wishes only good and can no longer wish evil.⁶² As explained earlier, this argument is fully mirrored by Waggoner, when he states that Christ was “[s]inless, yet not only counted as a sinner, but actually taking upon Himself sinful nature.”⁶³

c) Christ’s two natures deserve unified veneration | Although deified, human nature remains unaltered in Jesus Christ. Being united with God through hypostatic union, human nature merits the same adoration as the divine nature. This dogmatic position had been clarified by the decisions of the Third, the Fifth, and the Seventh Ecumenical councils.⁶⁴ Waggoner is in complete agreement with this perspective, as he writes that,

“So truly was Christ God, even when here among men, that when asked to exhibit the Father He could say, Behold Me. And this brings to mind the statement that when the Father brought the First-begotten into the world, He said, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him.’ Heb. 1:6. It was not simply when Christ was sharing the glory of the Father before the world was that He was entitled to homage, but when He came a Babe in Bethlehem, even then all the angels of God were commanded to adore Him.”⁶⁵

d) Virgin Mary is Birth-Giver-of-God (Theotokos) | Because, according to the Nicene Creed, the One born of Virgin Mary is “true God from True God” (Gr. Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ), and “was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man” (Gr. ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου, καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα), and retains human nature for eternity (since Jesus Christ was raised

⁶² Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 226–7.

⁶³ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 27–28.

⁶⁴ Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 227.

⁶⁵ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 14.

to heaven in His body), Virgin Mary becomes Theotokos, or Birth-Giver-of-God, simply because Christ's humanity is united with divinity.⁶⁶

On the subject of Virgin Mary, as mentioned earlier, Waggoner does not engage in his Christology. Nevertheless, the current beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church include the recognition of Christ's birth of Virgin Mary.⁶⁷

e) Jesus Christ has two wills and activities corresponding to the two natures | Due to the hypostatic union, in Jesus Christ there are two wills and two activities, because his work is *theandric*; that is divine and human. Due to the process of *perichoresis* between the two natures, the divine nature shares, and the human nature receives, such as in the Gethsemane.⁶⁸ (Luke 22:42)

Waggoner recognizes this aspect as well. In terms of divine will, he writes that

“He is the One through whom the Divine will and the Divine power are made known to men. He is, so to speak, the mouth-piece of Divinity, the manifestation of the Godhead. He declares or makes God known to man. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and therefore the Father is not relegated to a secondary position, as some imagine.”⁶⁹

As far as human will is concerned, Waggoner is cautious to emphasize this too much, as the priority of his argument is to make the case for Christ's divinity.

Orthodox Christianity holds the hypostatic union as a dogma, based on the outcome of the collective decision of the ecumenical councils. Therefore, the dogma of

⁶⁶ The dogma about Virgin Mary as Theotokos had been formulated during the Third, the Fifth, and the Seventh Ecumenical councils. See, Todoran, Zăgrean, *Teologia Dogmatică*, 227–8.

⁶⁷ On its central website (www.adventist.org), the Seventh-day Adventist Church publishes 28 *Fundamental Beliefs*. According to the 2015 Edition, the fourth belief states that, “God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of *the virgin Mary* [emphasis added]. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)

⁶⁸ Ibid., 229.

⁶⁹ Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, 44–45.

hypostatic union of the two natures in Jesus Christ was historically enforced as a static doctrine in the Orthodox Church.⁷⁰

It must be emphasized that, while on the Protestant side, a theologian has the flexibility of personal reflection and creativity to interpret the scripture in whatever fashion the theologian sees fitting, on the Orthodox side, dogmas hold their fixity in the collective decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, and they cannot be changed. The only flexibility that an Orthodox theologian has is to extrapolate on a fixed doctrine for the purpose of strengthening the argument, to draw inferences, to make various connections that display no disagreement or contradiction with other dogmas, and to reflect and expand its creativity unto the liturgical arena, and perhaps make correlations with the cultural context to which it is explained.

5.4 Two Conclusive Realities: Dogmatic and Missionary

As this chapter approaches its end, it is important to underscore two conclusive realities: one *dogmatic*, one *missionary*.

Dogmatically, it is important to emphasize that the salvation of humanity from under the bondage of sin is an act of sacrificial love manifested by God. Neither the Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae, nor the SDA theologian Ellet J. Waggoner understood it as a pure juridical act, but as an expression of supreme divine providence materialized in an act of divine, sacrificial love. This is because, in the view of each theologian, God created the world to be good, God cares for it, gives freedom to His

⁷⁰ The Anathematisms of St Cyril Against Nestorius which had been adopted during the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (A.D.431), the Council deliberated the following statement. "If anyone shall after the [hypostatic] union divide the hypostases in the one Christ, joining them by that connexion alone, which happens according to worthiness, or even authority and power, and not rather by a coming together (συνόδω), which is made by natural union (ἔνωσιν Φυσικὴν): let him be anathema. If any one says that Christ, who is also Emmanuel, is One, not [merely] in consequence of connection, but [also] in nature, and does not acknowledge the connection (συνάφεια) of the two natures, that of the Logos and of the assumed manhood, in one Son, as still continuing without mingling; let him be anathema." Henry R. Percival, ed. *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church in NPNF, Vol. 14*, eds. See, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 211.

most beloved creature, and rescues the human being from self-destruction. This is the reason why God himself becomes human to save the world, and in doing so, God empties Himself of his splendour and glory by sharing the human condition through a *hypostatic union*. This unspeakable love is the essence of the Trinity, and the essence of the relationship between God and humanity; an interpretation which both Stăniloae and Waggoner subscribed to. As Dumitru Stăniloae explains this, the dynamic of love remains the only logic to this paradox.

“The Church Fathers affirm that if there was not a Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, the Father would not have pleased to create men—as sons similar to the Only-Begotten Son, whom to love, and who would love Him in return—and without such a Son, there could not have been anyone else, who, out of love for the Father, would be willing to create other sons who could love the Father just like He does, then God would have fatally remained as one lacking omnipotence; separated from men, He would have been subjected, similarly to any essence, to laws that can not be escaped. Without God as a Father and Son (and Spirit), there would be only a pantheistic vision of an essence out of which everything evolves, circumscribed by its blind and unsurpassable laws. Therefore, when people refused to respond to God’s love with their love, the Father, yet again, entrusted the Son with the mission to become a man in order to show the men the model of a man who is a true lover of God, and to empower them to love.”⁷¹

Assuming that God could have created the world through an intermediary—as the Arians have taught—then the very logic of goodness would have been completely rejected. As such, God would remain solitary as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*—to use Rudolf Otto’s expression—and humanity would remain victim not only of unshakable forces of the universe, but of death itself.

At a missionary level, SDA Church, in its care for the salvation of humanity, ought to enhance its strategies of theological communication and insight, by looking at similarities rather than differences—as these are the most constructive in bringing the good news. As demonstrated by this chapter, and in concert with my own missionary background and experience, a positive missionary encounter can lead to surprising missionary clues and gems of insight that will bring people together. This is because, as the Son prayed to the Father, He stated that “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray

⁷¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost iubirea* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1993), 47–8.

also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:20–21)

5.5 Conclusions

As a conclusion to this chapter it is important to emphasize that in continuing the quest for comparative Christology between Adventism and Orthodoxy (by focusing exclusively on the theories of *kenosis* and *hypostatic union*), we answered the secondary set of questions, and demonstrated that at least from this perspective, the Seventh-day Adventism is perhaps ready to engage a meaningful Christological dialogue with Orthodox Christianity. By exploring Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner’s Christology, in comparison with the traditional Orthodox Christology (as explained by the three Romanian Orthodox theologians: Dumitru Stăniloae, Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean), we were able to demonstrate an intriguing similarity between the two theological positions. Because the writings of the three Orthodox theologians are representative for Orthodox Christianity in the sense that Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean are the authors of the main standard textbook of *Dogmatic Theology*, used in the Romanian Orthodox theological education and Dumitru Stăniloae occupies “a position in present-day Orthodoxy comparable to that of Karl Barth in Protestantism, and Karl Rahner in Roman Catholicism,” strengthens our confidence in future positive outcomes that may emerge from this work. It is my hope that I succeeded in demonstrating the fact that Adventist Christology is not only mature enough to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Orthodox Christianity, but it can serve as a platform for improving ecclesiastic relationships in protecting freedom of worship in areas where Orthodox Christianity is numerically superior.

Chapter 6

Conclusions: Limitations and Opportunities for Further Work

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 Objectives

The first objective of this thesis was to investigate and explain why, and in which context, the Seventh-day Adventist Church adopted a Trinitarian Christology. The second objective of the thesis was to demonstrate that it is justifiable to claim that the Seventh-day Adventism now has a seasoned Christology, and as such, the SDA Church is ready to enter into a meaningful Christological dialogue with other Christian Churches; in this case, the Eastern Orthodox Church. The justifiability of the claim of readiness for Christological dialogue was demonstrated through an in-depth analysis and comparison of two prominent theologians: Ellet J. Waggoner (on the Adventist side) and Dumitru Stăniloae (on the Orthodox side); whose Christologies are strikingly similar. The choice of Romanian Orthodox Christianity, as a counterpart for the Seventh-day Adventism emerges from my familiarity with both Churches, theologies and cultural environments, and as such, the choice infuses a potential risk of bias and is contextually limited. This topic is highly significant for me *also* from a missionary perspective, because as a Romanian-born American Adventist pastor, I gained strong pastoral experience both in Romania and US, where I minister mainly among Romanian immigrants; most of these being former Orthodox.

6.1.2 Structure

Structurally, the thesis is focussed on depth rather than on breadth; as it approached Christology from the general to the particular. The first chapter mapped out the main

historical debates on Christology. The second chapter focused on the particular Christological case of Adventism. The third chapter penetrated Adventist Christology deeper, by focusing on the shift from Arianism to Trinitarianism in the context of the events that preceded and followed the 1888 General Conference. The fourth chapter selected the particular case of Ellet J. Waggoner, to exemplify and further explore this shift, and also to signal the potential for Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity. To further advance this potential, the final chapter is a case study of comparative Christology. By focusing on similarities between Ellet J. Waggoner and Dumitru Stăniolae this final chapter offers specific data for comparative analysis.

6.1.3 Dogmatic Platform

In outlining the dogmatic platform of what is considered to be ‘historical’ or ‘normative’ Christology (developed during the seven Ecumenical Councils and relatively preserved by the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches), I maintained a keen focus on the *sola scriptura* approach simply because the SDA Church disregards the Catholic and Orthodox reliance upon historical tradition, and considers it irrelevant and potentially misleading. At the same time, while exploring the formation of the ‘normative’ Christology during the Early Church, the fundamental role of the scripture remains predominant, in light of analyzing controversies such as Arianism and Nestorianism. Highlighting the pivotal role of scripture in full awareness of the input provided by the Ecumenical Councils for creedal uniformity, I retained the Orthodox model of Trinitarian Christology as leverage for analyzing Adventist Christology.

6.1.4 The Role of 1888 “Righteous by Faith Conference”

With a dogmatic frame of reference set, I proceeded to the exploration of the Christological debates that surrounded the 1888 “Righteous by Faith Conference” in

Minneapolis, and which, in a way, have also resuscitated the Early Christian paradigms and theological challenges. It did so in a new setting—the American environment—which was dominated by profound social and spiritual transformations infused by a newfound sense of freedom, nonconformity, and resentment against dogmatic control imposed by the creeds.

By exploring the historic and the theological milieu that surrounded the birth of Adventism, I clarified the predominant theological position which inquired how Jesus Christ relates to the Godhead. I did so in reference to the Protestant denominations such as Anabaptism, Restorationism, Methodism and Deism; denominations which helped set the stage for Adventist Christology. I also challenged the incremental shift from Arianism to Trinitarianism by giving special attention to the role played by some of the most prominent leaders and influencers (particularly by Ellen G. White) in changing the direction of the Adventist dogmatic discourse in the aftermath of the 1888 conference.

Also the exploration of the religious background and the theological influence of the new converts—who apparently paved the way toward the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology—was given special attention, particularly as I focussed on the Righteous by Faith Conference held in 1888, in Minneapolis, and on the Trinitarian impulses that surfaced during the Conference and in its aftermath. During this process I concluded that the 1888 events represented the peak of the Adventist dogmatic tensions between Arianism and Trinitarianism, as much as they spearheaded the adoption of Trinitarian Christology. I reached this conclusion through a close scrutiny of the main ingredients of the debates, the theological background of the pioneers of Adventism, the official Christology of the time, the anti-creedal stance of Adventism, and the state of the Church. The powerful influence of Ellen G. White as a shadow negotiator of Trinitarianism, the simmering resentments built against her by the supporters of the Arian Christology along with the aftershocks of the “Minneapolis syndrome” were

contrasted with the role played by W.W. Prescott, A. G. Daniels, and Ellet J Waggoner, who led to the post-1888 adoption of the Trinitarian doctrine.

6.1.5 The Significance of Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner

The work of Dr. Ellet J. Waggoner was given special attention during the transition toward the secondary set of questions explored by this thesis, as I examined his writings through the lenses of Eastern Orthodox Christology.

It is my conclusion that Waggoner's never affirmed the expression of Trinitarian Christology openly, but spoke of Christ in fully Trinitarian terms. Therefore, Waggoner's adoption of a Trinitarian Christology was not the result of a possible trendy influence, coming from the younger generation of theologians, who were deeply involved in the debates that surrounded the Righteous by Faith Conference of 1888. Waggoner's adoption of a Trinitarian Christology came from his understanding of the doctrine of justification. As I demonstrated in the fourth chapter, Waggoner's doctrine of justification was the product of his view of Christ which served as a stepping stone toward the new conclusions he reached from studying the scripture. Though a declared Semi-Arian, it was the study of the Scripture which led him to the adoption of a Trinitarian Christology.

6.1.5.1 Waggoner's Path to Trinitarianism

Waggoner's conceptualization of justification indicated that only a Saviour who is God Himself is willing and able to erase the sin completely. In Waggoner's view, it was not a condition imposed by the nature of the original sin that set the bar for humanity's need of a Justifier of a specific rank. On the contrary, it was God's providence and love for humanity that brought salvation and immortality, simply because the power of sin does not determine the act of salvation.

In making this demonstration, I first introduced Waggoner's logic of Justifier—Justification by Faith; along with the role played by Faith (backed only by works that derived from the faith) during the process of justification. Waggoner's arguments are supported exclusively through solid biblical data that give reference to the divine promise for salvation. Waggoner cared for none's opinion, as he quoted nobody but the scripture. Therefore, he adopted and promoted the content of a Trinitarian Christology as a personal conclusive assurance.

6.1.5.2 Waggoner's Potential for Christological Dialogue with Orthodoxy

Having Waggoner's Trinitarian Christology clarified on a dogmatic platform, I then proceeded to a possible application of his thinking on the arena of political theology—for the benefit of interfaith dialogue—and signalled several inter-confessional considerations by drawing parallels between Waggoner's thinking and Orthodox Christianity, with minimal references to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in general.

Considering that the Orthodox dogmatic frame of reference was used as leverage in analyzing Waggoner's Christology, I enhanced his argument through inter-confessional references, and analyzed his Christology on a comparative explanatory platform. In line with the Justifier's intention proclaimed in the Protoevangelium, I also scrutinized Waggoner's Christology on the questions of freedom, evil, sin, punishment, justification and salvation; concluding—in a relative concurrence with the Orthodox platform—that Waggoner's argument derived from a close scrutiny of the scripture. Waggoner's identification of the Justifier takes place through an analytic sequence of Old Testament prophecies and their fulfilment in the New Testament which confirm God becoming human in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

With this biblical data set, Waggoner's understanding of the relation between the divine and human was yet again analyzed through the lenses of the Orthodox frame of reference, in attempting to answer *why and how God became man*, and *how the two natures of Jesus Christ (divine and human) are interrelated in the Person of Christ*.

In answering these two questions, I embarked upon the quest of comparative Christology, by focusing exclusively on the theories of *kenosis* and *hypostatic union*. This quest not only enhanced (and perhaps systematized) Waggoner's thinking—in terms of why and how God became man, and how divine and human natures reconciled in the person of Christ—but also provided significant data for future Christological dialogue, at least with Eastern Christianity.

Waggoner's Christology was contrasted and compared with the traditional Eastern Orthodox Christology viewed through the lenses of three prominent Romanian Orthodox theologians: Dumitru Stăniloae, Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean. While Isidor Todoran and Ioan Zăgrean are the authors of the textbook on *Dogmatic Theology* used in training the Romanian Orthodox clergy, Dumitru Stăniloae holds "a position in present-day Orthodoxy comparable to that of Karl Barth in Protestantism, and Karl Rahner in Roman Catholicism,"¹ as characterized by Kallistos Ware of the University of Oxford. By comparing the doctrines of kenosis and hypostatic union from the perspectives of Waggoner (on the Adventist side) and Stăniloae, Todoran and Zăgrean (on the Orthodox side), I demonstrated that Adventist Christology and Eastern Christianity hold common views which will ease the possibility of a meaningful dialogue meant to ensure religious coexistence, if nothing else.

In my opinion, the significance of this research derives from its potential for a double application. A first application rests upon the historical need to clarify the excursus which led to the official adoption of Trinitarian Christology by the Seventh—

¹ Kallistos Ware, "Foreword," *The Experience of God: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, by Dumitru Stăniloae (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), xxiv.

day Adventist Church. A second application is in the area of political theology—particularly in the area of interfaith dialogue—a ministry that is still in its infancy within the structures of SDA Church; as the Church had been focussing (and still does) primarily on mission and evangelization, and less on interfaith dialogue.

6.2 Accomplishments

It is my hope that, in writing this thesis, I have succeeded to convince even the most sceptical reader about the missionary goal of this thesis. I also hope that my presentation of facts and assumptions was advanced in a coherent fashion. I strived to rely only on those ideas and resources, which quantitatively and qualitatively are representative of the institutions, personalities and the sets of belief I have engaged. As expected of a doctoral thesis, my focus was on the depth rather than on the breadth, and this undertaking often set traps for additional contingencies. I tried to warn the reader about some glaring limitations (to the extent I was aware of them), and should I missed any additional ones, will be yet another limitation unto itself.

I also hope that the title does justice to the contents, and fails to mislead the readers, as they will find inside nothing less than what the title attempts to suggest. I must also underscore that, my deliberate exploration of some of the early Christian resources was performed as an effort to assure the Orthodox readers of my most sincere intent to regard the theological tradition of Eastern Christianity with understanding and respect.

The confessional context in which I conducted my theological investigations had often set traps, as I had to carefully anticipate (and possibly navigate) the sentiments of those readers for whom confessional dialogue is still a taboo; sentiments that normally arise from temptations for special pleadings. If anything, doing justice to the position of the one you may or may not agree with is an attempt to recognize God's image in each

human being. While, it may be honest for some to adopt the position of a special pleading, for others such position might lead to subjectivism; something that I strived to avoid. I feel that it is only through such honest dialogue that I can practice what I preach. The effort was considerable especially when my fundamental intention was to challenge two robust traditions—or ‘competitors’ as one may say—to revisit their internal attitudes about each other.

6.3 Limitations

However, as a matter of intellectual honesty, I must also recognize that in the interest of depth (rather than breadth) the subjects explored by this thesis are limited in the following way.

First, the analysis of the Trinitarian Christology focuses on a limited period of time, as it is centred on the events surrounding the 1888 Righteous by Faith Conference from Minneapolis and provides minimal references to the later developments that took place during the twentieth century.

A second limitation emerges from the fact that, while focused on the centrality of Christology, the thesis analyzes in depth only one Adventist theologian, Ellet J. Waggoner—whom for the sake of the missionary function of my work I took to be a—representative sample of the shift toward a Trinitarian Christology, there are numerous Adventist theologians of similar repute or higher. Conversely, it comes easier on the Orthodox side to be limited in the choice of theologians simply because, in the Orthodox tradition, there is limited flexibility in rewriting Christology, as everything ought to conform to the dogmas set during the Ecumenical Councils, which are also encapsulated in the *Symbol of Faith*, or the *Creed*.

Therefore, due to such limitations, and in spite of my personal confidence of providing a reliable intellectual trajectory, the topic still remains expandable and subject to future research, scrutiny and testing; something I look forward to see in the near future.

A third limitation of the thesis emerges from its comparative aspect. One must recognize that the audacity to navigate two complex theologies, in an attempt to bridge two vast Christianities, was a daring intellectual undertaking. At times, I felt that the results had been weak, or remained unaccomplished, or, on the contrary, went beyond my expectations. Yet, the extent to which I succeeded will be up to the reader to evaluate. My attempt to generate a smooth transition from the general to the particular, and the cross-fertilization I attempted to develop between the first two chapters—two chapters sworn to appear disconnected by context, contents, and history—will speak for itself in the way I liked together their contents. I opened occasional windows between the two chapters, by making occasional cross-references with historic or philosophic hints. Whether I succeeded or not, again, it is up to the reader, and to the future researchers to fill the unfortunate gaps I left behind in my work.

A fourth limitation might derive from the paramount (and perhaps disproportionate) attention I gave to some of the early Church Fathers, and to the significance of the 1888 Minneapolis Conference.

In giving an express attention to the early Church Fathers, I did so with the intent not only to engage deeply the fundamentals of the Orthodox theology (as foreground for the later contents of the dissertation), but also to indicate my serious intention for Christological dialogue with Eastern Christianity. By infusing the thesis with details about the intensity of the debates that took place during early Christianity, I took the risk of assuming that one might be led to an empathic understanding (and perhaps appreciation) of the intensity of the debates that took place in Adventism. By anchoring the conversation unto the most ancient theological ideas—foundational for Eastern

Christianity—I also took the risk of assuming that the Orthodox theologians might be stimulated to enter into a sincere Christological dialogue with the Adventist theologians. The Orthodox might come to appreciate the passionate efforts made by Adventism to recognize Christ’s full divinity and adopt the Holy Trinity.

A matching intent, to set a high bar for a meaningful Christological dialogue, is visible in the way I presented the 1888 Minneapolis Conference. The significance that the events of 1888 received in terms of content and historic merit was constructed with the intention to present a different setting where the debates over the divine–human nature of Christ took place, and where those engaged in such debates were perhaps as intentional as the early Christians were.

I am also confident that history will give the 1888 event the credit it merits, as a pivotal point in the evolution of Adventist Christology. In support for this sense of confidence, I selected and zoomed into the work of a particular theologian—Ellet J. Waggoner—as an exemplar that will help us chart the nature of the Adventist theological trail from Arianism to Trinitarianism. As I attempted to demonstrate, Waggoner was a solid example of a thinker who switched theological positions—fully on the account of Scripture—and that this switch found its psychological peak in the context of the 1888 Minneapolis Conference.

Beyond the event of 1888, where Waggoner had been a major player, he remains a reliable exemplar that created a paper-trail and best represented the generation of Adventists which abandoned Arianism. Because my focus was on the adoption of the Trinitarian Christology, I focused my analysis on Waggoner’s work which he developed after 1888, as this is more stable, and makes a more coherent case. It is more stable because the reverberations of 1888 had strengthened his beliefs, his knowledge and ability to manage of the text of the Bible increased, and his theological understanding matured. It is more coherent because—whether he ever imagined this or not—his

theology might open of the gates for new theological perspectives which resonate with Eastern Christianity.

One may easily argue that Waggoner is a less significant figure in the Seventh-day Adventist theology. While true, my selection of Waggoner, as a significant spokesman for Adventism, was purely instrumental. It was instrumental simply because the language style, the logic and the way Waggoner used the Scripture appears to run on parallel tracks with Eastern Christianity, and as such, has a high potential in making an Orthodox theologian comfortable with a dialogue.

Furthermore, by having the audacity to compare and contrast Waggoner's ideas with those of Isidor Todoran, Ioan Zăgrean and Dumitru Stăniloae, my hope was to introduce to the Orthodox theologians, the case of an Adventist theologian who left Arianism and arrived to Trinitarian conclusions in a way that was arguably similar to the way the Early Christians did.

And, because a conversation ought to start somewhere, it is my assumption that Waggoner has something that the Orthodox would appreciate and easily latch into; thus generating an attitude of favourability toward conversation.

Perhaps a last glaring limitation—more aesthetic than structural—is the presence of some redundancies. Indeed, a deliberate effort had been made to avoid such redundancies for structural and aesthetic rationales. Yet, some ideas remained repetitive due to my intentional effort to maintain a sense of grounding into a common denominator, while flirting indeed with possible talking points, or engaging various vantage points, or elaborating upon a particular issue that needed to be restated in a new context.

6.4 Further Work

For missionary purpose, additional areas of future research in Comparative Christology between Adventism and Orthodox Christianity may include questions on general themes related to Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, meaning of communion, the role of Virgin Mary, and others. The benefit of further research is that it can provide appropriate data for a constructive dialogue on more difficult subjects such as Sabbath keeping, Second Coming of Christ, the relationship between faith and works in human salvation, the afterlife, and others.

6.4.1 Missionary Agenda

Without any doubt, in order to avoid sectarianism, contemporary and future missionary work ought to be backed by solid and well-informed theology. To engage an interlocutor who shares the same scripture along with a similar set of beliefs, one has to study carefully the cultural surroundings which constitute the interlocutor's system of meaning, as well as the interlocutor's dogmatic narrative. One has to understand the interlocutor's meaning of life, rhythm of life, variety of beliefs, superstitions, fears and hopes. One has to understand the scripture's imposition (or lack thereof) in a believer's lifestyle, along with the liturgical vibe given by the way the interlocutor worships. Therefore, in attempting to understand and engage the overall system of meaning of Orthodox Christianity, for my own edification, I felt morally compelled to do justice to my own theology, and learn more about the interlocutor.

The missionary scope of this thesis can never be overstated. For this reason, this academic undertaking can be looked upon as unidirectional in its intent, and as going beyond the contingencies of political theology. Even if some Orthodox will remain cold or indifferent to such an initiative, by doing what I am doing, there will always be a possibility for the raise of unexpected opportunities, which will be mutually gratifying

for both Adventist and Orthodox. There will always be an open door, even though for example the Romanian Orthodox Church (given my contextual analysis), might feel that it has little to gain from such engagement, as it holds a position of power. I am confident, as I attempted to demonstrate in the second part of the thesis, that my optimism is justified.

Last but not least, and as naïve as this may appear, by daring to propose and establish a sense of congruence between a 19th century American Adventist thinker, and a contemporary Romanian Orthodox thinker, the possibility of positive ecumenical consequences still remains on the table. This is because dialogue is not always about theological personalities, but also about theological ideas that stay at the basis of religious organizations.

6.4.2 The Power of Words in Adopting a ‘Common’ Language

As constructive dialogue is anchored in affirmative terminology, a ‘common’ language ought to be constructed, and the lexicon be chosen with care and sensibility. This is so because terminology is a divine gift into itself. It is a divine gift because it serves as a communicative tool of fundamental truths. Also, if properly managed, affirmative terminology can become a reliable bridge to translate spiritual realities, and as such, it has unlimited potential in leading not only to a constructive dialogue, but it can lead to one’s salvation and attainment of the everlasting life.

Yet, words have their limitations because of human subjectivity, attitudes, and intellectual contingencies. One must further understand that a word is not only a communicative tool of divine inspiration, but also a human symbol and a representation of concepts and complexities restricted to human subjectivity. When human subjectivity is combined with attitudes of denial and refusal to engage someone else’s perception, a word may quickly become the Discord’s Apple. Even if a word has divine origins—as it

might have been received as epiphany—a closed human reasoning fails to comprehend it because of an exclusive human representation which although complex in its symbolic representation it remains narrow and limited in transcending the human dimension. Nevertheless, when human ability to comprehend reaches its own limitations, but remains accessible and open to the divine, it is then when the divine intervenes in the form of inspiration and enlightenment. It is, in a way, a different manner of synergy taking place between the divine and the human.

To overcome such challenges in terminology, one might appeal to spirituality as a tool of bridging the gap between the human and the spiritual perception of reality. This is where the Protestant insistence upon personal experience and the Orthodox appeal to mystery can be properly engaged. It can be engaged by both sides acknowledging the limitations of human subjectivity and the possibility for mystery—yet both being equally important and necessary just as divine synergy is—something that both Orthodox and Protestant will most likely agree. This may also eliminate the risk mutual gratification with heretical accusations, as the acceptance of divine dependency on language might appease the classical dogmatists who overemphasize mystery and the literalists who overemphasize personal experience. They may arrive to symbiotic conclusions due to their opening to the divine spark of inspiration, which can be granted only as a response to a most sincere prayer. Because the search for the deep meaning of salvation is mutual the answer may arrive perhaps in a most unexpected way.

The power of language can never be overestimated, particularly when attempting to design a conceptual structure for dialogue, and in selecting the topics to be engaged. When words are understood and used in their own cultural context, they possess deep emotional meaning. The way the words are used can deeply influence not only the direction of conversation, but also the emotional disposition of those engaged in dialogue. For example, the ability of an Adventist to use key terminology selected from

the Orthodox liturgical language, will increase one's ability to generate a feeling of similarity. This will help a Romanian Orthodox feel more 'at home' with the conversation, particularly as the Romanian Orthodox Church is very reluctant in abandoning its classical terminology preserved in its liturgical language which is inherited from the late seventeenth century translations performed by Antim Ivireanul,² and the ability of an Adventist to manoeuvre such language will create a solid disposition for dialogue.

Nevertheless, the adoption of such language might also be a two edge sword for the new converts from Orthodoxy to Adventism. As the experience of conversion involves the creation of an emotional safe zone between the old and the new, the use of such language may trigger feelings of guilt for the new converts for abandoning the old faith and tradition. The adaptation of the Adventist conversation style and even theological language to the Orthodox sensibilities may indeed improve the fluidity of conversation but only to an Orthodox. To a new convert to Adventism from Orthodoxy such language takes the risk of creating a sense of indisposition and refusal to engage in conversation. Furthermore, the new converts may encounter reactions due to the socialization realities of the members and due to aspects of differentiation and detachment from their previous worldview. Yet, the only negative outcome in this particular situation could lead to the refusal of the newly converts to enter into a dialogue, and as such, this limitation cannot outweigh the benefits of adopting such language.

² Florin Faifer, "Postfață: Antim între realitate și utopie" in Antim Ivireanul, *Didahii* (București: Editura Minerva, 1983), 213–239.

6.5 Final Thoughts

In restating the obvious as conclusive thoughts, the evolution of Adventist Christology mirrored or perhaps appeared to be a shadow of the spiritual milieu in which the Early Christian thinkers engaged a similar paradigm. This, without any doubt, has recreated the conversation. The building blocks which made up the concept of salvation appeared to have been identical, and implicitly, the logic of the relationship between such blocks could not but yield similar results. The historicity paradigm was mirrored into the structure of the thesis, and as such history is an ongoing phenomenon. Just as in the structure of this thesis, cross-fertilization between Adventism and Orthodoxy is only now proceedings through converts from Orthodoxy to Adventism. Because Adventism did not arise in an Orthodox sociological context, there remain significant opportunities and challenges, calling for a significant amount of work to be developed.

Therefore, in light of my ministerial experience in the Romanian Orthodox cultural setting, it is my hope that the Seventh-day Adventist Church will cease to be perceived as an American political enterprise, which is heretical and dissonant to the orthodox culture. Through my effort and intellectual contribution to break through the cold silence, I hope to encourage others to do the same—both Orthodox and Adventists—in bringing their own contributions to peaceful coexistence as children of God. By grafting commonalities rather than differences into the conversation, we will enable ourselves to maintain a positive and constructive conversation, which will help us bypass the humps raised by difficult history and politics of difference, making the world a better place.

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